DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 220 770 CG 016 177

AUTHOR Delaine, John K.
TITLE Who's Raising the Family? A Workbook for Parents and Children.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Clearinghouse, Madison.
SPONS AGENCY Wisconsin State Dept. of Health and Social Services, Madison.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 58p.
AVAILABLE FROM Wisconsin Clearinghouse, 1954 East Washington Ave., Madison, WI 53704-5291 ($4.85 postpaid, discounts on larger quantities).

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Rearing; Children; Communication Skills; Decision Making; Drinking; *Drug Abuse; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; *Parent Role; Parents; *Prevention; Role Models; Stress Variables

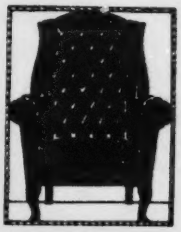
ABSTRACT

This workbook, designed for parents who are concerned about the possibility of drug abusing children, supports the idea of a strong family and active, involved parenting. Strategies are suggested to improve the parent-child relationship, including a self-test to help parents consider their own attitudes and behavior, as well as suggestions for teaching children to develop a positive self-concept, express their feelings, make decisions, accept their responsibilities, and become assertive. Parenting methods are discussed including the family meeting, talking about and developing alternatives to drugs and alcohol, television, and coping with extreme parental stress. The first appendix offers help to those parents with alcohol or drug problems while the second lists answers children gave to questions about their families from an informal study of elementary and junior high students. (JAC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

HARD COPY NOT AVAILABLE

ED220770



Who's Raising the Family? A Workbook for Parents and Children

by John K. Delaine

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Al Friedman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Published by:
Wisconsin Clearinghouse
1954 East Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53704-5291

Richard Yoast, Ph.D., Editor
Photographs by the author
Designed by Jane Tenenbaum

©1981, Wisconsin Clearinghouse, Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, all rights reserved. Funded from NIDA PL92-255, through the Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services.

CG 016177

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my thanks to the staff of the Wisconsin Clearinghouse and to the many other persons who helped, encouraged and contributed to the writing of this book. It does not represent one person's efforts, but rather an assemblage of ideas from many sources. I wish to particularly express my gratitude to Noelle and Todd from whom I received the energy and enthusiasm to begin this project, and without whom I would not have known the ordeals and absolute joys of being a parent.

John Delaine

Contents

Introduction 1

Using This Workbook 2

Chapter 1: What Prevention Means to a Parent 3

Chapter 2: Parent's Self-Test 5

Chapter 3: Teachable Skills for Children 9

Section A: Developing Positive Self-Concept 10
Section B: Expressing Feelings 16
Section C: Assertiveness for Children 19
Section D: Making Decisions and Solving Problems 23
Section E: Accepting Responsibility for One's Actions 27

Chapter 4: Parenting Methods 31

Section A: The Family Meeting 32
Section B: Talking About Alcohol/Drugs 34
Section C: Developing Alternatives to Alcohol/Drug Use 38
Section D: Television and the Family 42
Section E: Coping With Extreme Parental Stress 45

Appendix A: If You Think You May Have a Problem with Alcohol 47

Appendix B: Children's Responses to Questions of What They Need From Parents 48

Resources and Recommended Reading 50

Introduction

This book is for any parents who have ever worried about their children someday getting involved with drugs, or who have felt helpless and frustrated at being able to do anything about it. This book is for my friend Ralph who sat with me one day wringing his hands and predicting the worst for his children: "Drugs are so prevalent today; any kid that goes to school is inevitably going to do drugs, and parents can't do anything about it."

Ralph is right about one thing: drug use and abuse is becoming common at younger and younger ages. My son in fifth grade tells me that some of his classmates are using drugs before and after school. Dr. Sidney Cohen stated, in an article about marijuana, that frequency and prevalence of use has increased markedly in the eight to eleven year old group.[1] Ralph is right about that, but the other part of his gloomy prediction is not true. Young people will probably always experiment with some drugs, curiosity being a natural part of being young. But a child becoming enmeshed in chemical abuse is not inevitable, and there *is* something parents can do . . . it's called **prevention**, and that's what this book is all about.

It is a mistake for parents to look at alcohol/drug abuse by adolescents and teenagers as an isolated phenomenon. Youngsters who are curious about drugs are a reflection of our drug-oriented culture. We are bombarded with advertising messages that tell us there is a pharmaceutical answer to everything that may go wrong in our lives. Adults take pills at the drop of a hat: we drink alcohol to alleviate our boredom and frustration; we take Valium when we are upset; we take something to go to sleep, and we take something to wake up (most of us don't think caffeine in coffee is a drug, but it is). So many of us rely on drugs of one kind or another for our normal daily living that it's a small wonder children pick up the message that drugs are acceptable and end up experimenting with chemical substances. We consider our drug use "normal" and safe; youths consider their drug use "recreational" and safe. To single out adolescent and teenage drug abuse is to look only at one small part of a much larger and pervasive problem. This should be kept in mind as we focus on prevention in the family—the kind of model we parents present, what we teach our sons and daughters, what they learn at school, from friends, radio, TV and other sources.

This book will look at the way some positive parenting techniques and basic skills can lay the groundwork for responsible decision making *before* your children are faced with decisions about their own drug use. We cannot make those decisions for them; what we can do is give them some tools for making their own decisions responsibly. This book takes the realistic stance that someday your children will probably drink alcoholic beverages and may experiment with some other drugs.

Alcohol and other drug *abuse* is our target. What parents can do is create a family environment which supports and promotes certain skills and values that will make chemical abuse far less likely. **This book supports the idea of a strong family, and involved and active parenting.**

Preventive medicine means that we get periodic medical checkups even though there's nothing apparently wrong, the idea being to stop a condition before it starts, and to promote healthy environments and ways of living. Alcohol/drug abuse prevention is the same thing. Prevention can be a great beginning to building a healthy family, and a tremendous learning experience for you as well as your children. This book will help families give themselves a "checkup" that can lead to stopping their children's alcohol/drug abuse before it starts.

For parents whose children are already using or abusing drugs and having problems:

This manual can help provide some strategies to improve your relationship with your children and to prevent further problems. It is not intended to be a substitute for a strong and effective intervention to stop the abuse.

If your son or daughter is already having problems, seek help from others—local alcoholism and drug abuse councils, Alateen, mental health and school personnel. Find a friend, relative or other parents to talk over your feelings. And, most importantly, talk with your child—let them know you love them and care about what is happening and that you are ready to act.

---

1. Drug Abuse And Alcholism Newsletter, Vol. VIII, No. 4, May, 1979.

Using This Workbook

The concepts and exercises in this book are applicable to children of any age from about five on up. But, because all children go through ages and stages of development, and no two are exactly alike, use your judgment about when the time is right to try out some of these ideas. Earlier is usually better than later. Adjust the exercises as you see fit to match the ages of your children. Choose which ideas you want to use and when.

Who's raising the family? is not intended to be totally digested as the bible of child rearing, or the "one and only true path" for parents to follow. Indeed, you may find yourself disagreeing with some things in the text. If so, fine. The intent of this workbook is to help parents move away from a reactive stance (simply *reacting* to what their children may do), and begin to think about their parenting, to question their methods, to question the methods in this workbook . . . in short, to become *conscious* of their parenting.

There is a lot of material here directed to parents, yet a good portion of this book is intended to be worked on by parent and child together. Taken all at once, both you and your children may get overwhelmed. Think of these concepts and exercises as portions to be taken one at a time, and when you feel the time is right. Keep the workbook around and return to it from time to time. Involve your children in the use of this workbook; they'll appreciate knowing that you care.

Being proactive means jumping out in front of events, and making them hapen the way you want them to. *Who's Raising the Family?* takes the perspective that in creating a healthy living environment for a family, parents are the ones who need to take the initiative.

1. What Prevention Means to a Parent

Alcohol/drug abuse prevention means lots of things. One thing it most definitely does not mean is tying your kids in a chair and lecturing them about the evils of drugs. Parents tried that approach in the 60's and early 70's and it was an abysmal failure. Likewise, saying that we have a "drug problem" puts the emphasis on the chemicals themselves, as if they had legs and chased after our children. What we do have is a "people problem." What people do with drugs creates the problem. Because we're dealing with a "people problem," it makes sense that a good family prevention program emphasize the positive things you want to **promote**, rather than concentrating on the negative things you want to prevent.

Here's the reason. By the time your children are old enough to be faced with making decisions about using drugs, they will 1) be under the influence of their friends and peers, and 2) they will be out of the home a good portion of the day (in school, parks, or playing outside or at a friend's house). They will have to face those decisions by themselves. Unless you tie a very long rope to your children, and plant tape recorders in their lunchboxes, they will be off on their own when they face alcohol/drug decisions. Just as we can't be there when they decide whether or not to put water in someone's gas tank, carry an elderly person's groceries, or spend their allowance on something nonedible, we're not going to be there when they make their own alcohol/drug decisions.

It follows logically that a large part of prevention involves teaching children decision-making skills so they'll have a solid foundation for problem-solving and making hard decisions when the time comes. But prevention also involves things like assertiveness, building a good self-concept, being able to express one's feelings, setting realistic expectations and goals, learning to accept responsibility for one's actions, and more.

You might argue that these things are just general coping skills for dealing with life, and you'd be right. But they also happen to be the basic, essential skills that will better prepare your children for making responsible decisions about their own alcohol/drug use. Beyond specific skills, prevention for families also means that parents be able to state clearly and openly to their children that they love and care about them. It means being there when they ask for help. It means giving them a hug for no particular reason at all. It means letting them know when they do things right, as well as setting boundaries and limits to their behavior. It means letting them know what your values are and that you value their opinions and ideas. Alcohol/drug abuse prevention involves more than just the kids; it involves the whole family.

For purposes of clarity, by "family" I am referring to a close group of people who care about and love each other. That could be a one-parent family, a two-parent family; it could mean one child or eleven. Some families come with grandparents or aunts and uncles living in. Whatever the makeup, we all come from, or are in, a family of one sort or another. One is not any better than the other. The important thing for children is that they know they have a close group of people who care about them.

Actually, it is possible for your family to be involved in prevention and seldom mention alcohol or other drugs. As a parent, you're already doing some of these things. Great. There will, however, come a time when you'll need to talk with your children about using alcohol/drugs, and to let them know clearly what your expectations are. Chapter 4, Section B is devoted to that subject. But for now, remember, it is good parenting to emphasize the positive things you want to promote, rather than concentrating on the negative things you want to prevent.

The old saw, "it's never too late," is certainly appropriate here. It is never too late to begin building a healthier family and helping young people become thinking adults. But conversely, it's never too early either. Positive parenting applies to all ages. Don't let the timing bother you. Anytime is a good time to begin your family's prevention effort.

Quick Review

☞ Children becoming involved with chemical abuse is not inevitable. Parents can do something to prevent alcohol/drug abuse.

☞ When you look at adolescent and teenage drug abuse, be sure you look at the whole picture, including the much larger problem of our cultural acceptance of drugs and beware of quick, easy answers to difficult problems.

☞ The goal is not to ban all drugs or eliminate responsible use of chemicals; drug *abuse* is our target.

☞ We don't have a "drug problem;" we have a "people problem." Focus not on the drugs themselves, but the reasons why people use and abuse them.

☞ Accept the fact that your children will make their own decisions about their alcohol/drug use based partly on the values and skills you give them. Parents can't make those decisions for them; but they can help shape how the decisions are made.

☞ Prevention involves teaching your children values and skills before they are faced with alcohol/drug decisions.

☞ It's never too late, or never too early to begin your family's chemical abuse prevention program.

☞ A good family prevention program means emphasizing the positive things you want to promote, rather than concentrating on the negative things you want to prevent. (Say this one over to yourself at least ten times!)

2. Parent's Self-Test

Put aside worrying about your children for now and take a few minutes to consider your own values and behavior, specifically your own alcohol/drug-related values and behavior. Go through the following questions and give yourself *honest* answers; the other kind don't count. These questions may help you clarify some attitudes and behaviors which have become so automatic that you never stop to think about them anymore.

It only takes a few minutes. Go through the questions now before reading any further.

1. When you have friends over do you immediately offer them a drink (an alcoholic beverage)?

2. When you have a headache or are nervous or upset, is your immediate response to "take something" to get rid of the feeling?

3. Can you close the door to your medicine chest without hearing the sound of breaking glass from all the pill (prescription and non-prescription) bottles that are stuffed in there?

4. Have your children ever seen you drunk?

5. When you seek medical help for a physical ailment, are you disappointed when the doctor doesn't give you a prescription or some other medication?

6. In your home is it considered "manly" or "macho" to be able to drink a lot, or is it "unladylike" to drink a lot?

7. In your home do people joke about getting drunk and doing crazy things ("Boy, Fred got so drunk the other night, he . . .")?

8. Do you know about and utilize methods to cope with minor aches and pains other than "taking something?"

9. Do you routinely take Nembutol, Seconol, Dalmane, Nytol, Sominex, or some other sleeping pill to fall asleep? Something to stay awake (coffee, coke, No Doz, etc.)?

10. Do your children ever hear their parents arguing about one or the other having had too much to drink?

11. When beginning a diet, is your first thought of obtaining diet pills to help you with your plan?

12. Do you smoke cigarets? How many packs per day?

13. Is drinking often the topic of conversation in your home?

14. Does your group of friends share prescriptions or any other medicines that have "worked" for them?

15. Have you ever warned your children about smoking while you were smoking? How about drinking?

16. Do you smoke marijuana? When, and how often?

17. Do you know the difference between a social drinker and an abusive drinker? Is there a difference? What?

18. How much coffee do you drink a day? Do you ever get nervous or edgy from drinking a lot of coffee? Do you crave a cup of coffee to wake up in the morning? Are you crabby without it?

19. Do you use any chemical substances to comfort yourself when you're depressed or "feeling down?"

20. Do you unconsciously gravitate toward social functions where there is a lot of drinking, and away from social functions where there is little or no drinking?

21. Do you handle alcohol or any other drugs in a way that you would *not* want your children to?

22. Do you drive a car when under the influence of alcohol or other mood altering drugs?

Our alcohol/drug use tends to become automatic . . . not something we consciously think about. Therefore, it would be a good idea to go back and ask yourself these questions again from time to time, and better yet to question your need of chemical substances before you use them.

Think about your answers for a while. Then read question 21 again. That's what this exercise is all about. **Parents model alcohol/drug use for their sons and daughters every day.**

After thinking about it, if you feel you might have a problem with your use of medicines or other drugs, **get some help now**. There are people waiting to give you that help when you ask for it. Start by looking in your phone book. If you're wondering about your alcohol use, or thinking that you might have a problem with alcohol (America's #1 abused drug), see Appendix A for more information and some ideas on what to do.

Parents as Models

It's a long established fact that parents model values and behavior for their children: actions speak louder than words. *How* you share things with other adults speaks much louder than what you might *say* to your children about sharing with their friends. Young people observe silently all the time. You might tell your children to "always be honest" or that "honesty is one of the highest virtues." But if you follow that by boasting about how you just got away with murder on your income taxes, or switch price tags on items in the store to get them cheaper, or lie to your neighbor about having the flu instead of turning down a dinner invitation, your actions give an unspoken but very powerful message to your child which is: "Life is much easier if you're *not* honest all the time." Think about it.

When my son was four, he became very fond of cursing out the car window at other drivers after having observed me doing it just once. That's a very simple example of direct modeling. But rest assured that your kids are observing your alcohol/drug use, too. Whether you know it or not, they notice whether you sip a glass of wine with dinner, or guzzle three six-packs in front of the TV. It's all behavior modeling that carries the message: "This kind of behavior is acceptable." Be prepared to see yourself reflected in what your kids do or say sooner or later.

Influences outside the family (movies, friends, magazines, school, gossip, peer pressure) also exert an influence on your child's behavior. But worrying about whether those influences are good or harmful is sort of like spinning your wheels to get the car out of the mud: the more upset you become, the more you spin your wheels, and it just doesn't get you anywhere. You cannot control all of those outside influences, and you'll drive yourself nuts trying.

The most productive and positive thing a parent can do in this regard is to:

- Take care of *yourself* first; clean up your own act;
- make sure your own values are clear and consistent;
- *practice* responsible drinking and drug use if that's what you will expect from your kids;
- *be* honest if that's a value you support;
- let your own behavior serve as a positive model for your children.

Then, even though your sons and daughters are subjected to what you consider "bad" influences outside the home, you can be at peace with yourself, knowing that you've provided your kids with at least one good, positive example of healthy living . . . *your* example. And that's a mighty powerful thing.

Remember: Rather than emphasizing the negative things you don't want your children to do, it is good parenting to *show* them an example of how you'd like them to live.

Quick Review

☞ Whether they are aware of it or not, parents model values and behavior which, sooner or later, will be reflected in their children.

☞ Parents' actions (what they *do*) speak louder than what they may *tell* their children.

☞ Parents cannot control *all* the outside influences acting on their children; attempting to is frustrating, hopeless and a quick way to develop a headache.

☞ First priority for parents worried about their children's future alcohol/drug habits is to look at themselves, and make sure *they* are practicing the things they hope their children will someday.

☞ If you think you might have a problem with your alcohol or other drug use, **get some help now.** Help is available for the asking. See Appendix A for more information about alcohol problems.

☞ Rather than emphasizing the negative things you don't want your youngsters to do, it is good parenting to *show them* an example of the things you would like them to do.

Exercise

List at least five positive things and five negative things that your child has already picked up from you and repeated. These things could be values, ideas, or direct behaviors.

Positive Things:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Negative Things:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Remember to go back and run through the SELF-TEST questions again, and ask yourself if you're modeling any alcohol/drug related behaviors that you would NOT want your children to repeat.

3. Teachable Skills for Children

Who can predict which young people will end up in trouble with alcohol or other drugs? I can't, but I can point to youths in deep trouble who have come from fancy neighborhoods as well as from more modest ones. I can also point to others who are healthy and well adjusted who have come from all extremes of neighborhoods and environments. The shell in which we live and raise our children—"condos," public housing, apartments, or the house with the white picket fence—seems to be of far less importance than **how** we parent. That's where the real difference lies.

What kind of job are you doing as a parent? Most parents I know would rather kiss a snake than admit that they don't know how to raise children. Realistically, we all try, but perhaps there's more to it than that. Where did we learn how to parent? Where did we get trained? Nurses, bus drivers, teachers, street sweepers, real estate agents and accountants were all provided some kind of training before they were allowed to pursue their professions. Our training as parents is derived mainly from having observed how our mothers and fathers did it. We make adjustments and changes here and there, but basically that's it.

How well does that system work? Well, that's how some of our most time-honored traditions and positive values are passed on, but it's also how child abuse is passed on from generation to generation—direct modeling. So the system is both good and bad. Maybe there's something more we can do.

We parents are not automatically blessed by some divine gift of knowledge about how to parent. We do the best we can and hope our children turn out OK. But the truth is, we can use all the help we can get and it's no crime for a parent to admit it.

Here is some help. What follows is a discussion of some teachable skills for children which will provide you with an excellent starting point for building a healthier family. We do not claim that following these guidelines will guarantee that your sons and daughters never get in trouble with alcohol and other drugs. What we're after here is to *seriously reduce the chances* of them becoming alcohol or other drug abusers. What these skills and techniques will do is lay the groundwork for a healthier family environment for your kids to thrive in

starting right now. If followed through over the long run, this will prepare them to make responsible decisions for themselves concerning all the problems they will face in the future, including their alcohol or other drug use.

This skills section includes things that all young people need to learn in order to function as mentally healthy adolescents and adults. Take these sections one at a time. Some of the methods, plans and techniques may require learning to do things in a whole new way, and that takes awhile. Take your time—you've got lots of it. Remember: whether your children are three, eleven, or sixteen, **now** is the right time to begin building a healthier family.

Teachable Skills

Section A: Developing Positive Self-Concept

Section B: Expressing Feelings

Section C: Assertiveness for Children

Section D: Making Decisions and Solving Problems

Section E: Accepting Responsibility for One's Actions

A. Developing Positive Self-Concept

"Low self-esteem" has been identified as a common characteristic of habitual drug abusers. It certainly is not the only factor, but it is an identified characteristic. Whether or not your kids will someday use "ups," "downs," "pot," alcohol or any other drugs to boost their self-image is an unanswered question that you can do something about now.

Think back over the last week. Do you recall using any phrases with your children like these:

"How many times do I have to tell you. . . ."

"Here (*groan*), you'd better let me do that. . . ."

"Just look at that mess you've made! It'll take me an hour to clean it up!!"

"Don't you ever *think*???!!!"

"What's the matter with you? Don't you ever listen???!!"

"Why can't you do that as well as . . . ."

Phrases like these are commonplace, and seem to roll off our parental tongues automatically. Listen to yourself. Try to hear the unspoken message in what you're saying. The powerful unspoken message in phrases like those above is "You're a dumb kid, and you can't figure anything out by yourself."

Here is what some students think:

☛ What are some things that your parents do that you don't like?

4th and 5th graders:

"When they yell at me."

"When they have a bad day and take it out on me."

"When they yell at you, or hit you, or throgh you around."

"When they say bad things about the things I like."

"Yell at me. When I'm sad usually they don't comfort me. Embaras me in front of other friends."

"They smoke, sometimes they fight, they yell, they drink, they go out too much . . ."

7th graders:

"When my dad puts me on a guilt trip."

"They drink. They smoke. They say things that embarres me."

"They yell at me in front of people. Hit me."

"When they always tell me who to like and what to do."

See Appendix B in back for a complete listing of responses to this question.

The negative messages we give our children can be quite unconscious—we don't even think about them. But, after some practice, positive messages can become automatic, too. A positive message doesn't have to be a detailed explanation of what a good thing your child did. It can be as simple as:

"Hey, nice job."
"Good going."
A smile and a wink.

Likewise, a child doesn't have to be the "best on the block" or a straight-A student to deserve some praise. Projects and tasks that seem so simple to us may be very difficult or very important to children (we can tie our shoes with our eyes closed, but to a five year old it's a major undertaking). **Every time your child does something right, no matter how small it may seem, it's an opportunity for you to give them some specific positive praise** (especially if it was something they didn't or couldn't do before).[2] You'll be helping them build a positive self-concept that can last a lifetime. Here are some everyday examples:

For small children:

"That was good remembering to put your crayons away when you're finished."

"It's really nice of you to help me carry in the groceries; you're being a good helper."

"I really like your drawing. Nice job."

"I like when you sing along with the radio . . . makes me feel good."

For older children:

"You got your homework done before dinner . . . great."

"I like when you offer to help . . . that job would have taken much longer without you."

"Looks like you got your math grade up from a D to a C . . . nice going."

"I hear that you walked home last night rather than ride with Bart because he'd had too much to drink . . . good thinking."

When appreciating your son or daughter in any of the wonderfully diverse ways in which you really do like them, keep in mind that Billy *can* be praised for the creative colors he chose to wear that day and Sara for the clever way she solved a puzzle. Both males and females can be appreciated for their minds, creativity, humor, thoughtfulness, beauty and physical strength. None of these attributes are valuable only in girls and not in boys or the other way around. And given the conflicting messages children receive from friends, peers, TV, movies and commercials, the home is the best and most important place for them to receive consistent praise for all their strengths. When a child has worked really hard at something they couldn't do before, it hurts when nobody notices or cares. It feels really good when somebody notices and lets them know that they care.

Parents need to set rules and limits in their households. But don't just yell when your child doesn't follow the rules. Let them know when they *did* do what they were supposed to. **Every time your child follows a house rule or regulation, no matter how small it may seem, it's an opportunity for you to give them some specific positive praise.** Here are some everyday examples.

For small children:

"Good remembering to put your clothes away before bedtime."

"Good. You're helping to clear the table without being asked. You're being a good helper."

For older children:

"I know you had something you wanted to tell me, but thanks for not interrupting me when I was on the phone. Now, what was it you wanted to say?"

"It was good you called home last night to say you'd be late. Thanks."

"Thanks for helping with the dishes."

Do phrases like these sound uncomfortable to you? They may seem awkward and even a bit strange at first; they did to me. But they're the best way to let your children know specifically what it is you like them to do. And phrases like these can, after a while, become automatic and quite comfortable. By praising the things your children do *right*, you are helping them shape a positive self-image. If you could look inside their heads after you have given your kids some specific positive praise, you might find ideas like these:

"Wow, Mom likes me."

"I *was* pretty smart to figure that out."

"I guess I *did* do a good job. That feels nice."

"I'm proud of what I did. It sure made Dad happy."

"I guess I'm not so dumb after all."

"Maybe they do trust me. That makes me feel more grown-up."

And besides shaping a positive self-concept, your child's behavior will tend to shift over to repeating the positive behaviors you have praised, and away from the negative behaviors you don't call as much attention to. But even more importantly, your children will be learning how to praise, encourage, and be positive toward other people. Think back to your own childhood. Did you receive praise and encouragement? If your answer is "no," remember how it felt not being praised for doing things right, or for trying really hard. Do you want your child to have those same feelings? We all want and need praise, and if we didn't get it in the past, we can start giving (and getting it back) now. Think about times when you were praised—it still feels good doesn't it?

---

2. The opportunities for praise are many. Of course, if we praised our children about *every* single thing they did, for years on end, they would feel like they were always being watched and never trusted. But it is especially important to provide praise to reinforce new learning behaviors and occasionally to let them know you still appreciate something they're doing well. Many of us err in providing too little rather than too much praise.

The 15-Minute Exercise

Next time you're with your children, check the clock and give yourself a time period of 15 minutes. Observe your children. See how many things you can find in that time period to praise your children for. Make a mark on a newspaper, a napkin, or whatever's available every time you give them some positive praise. And yes, even the "unimportant" things count. Your goal is to roll up as high a score as you possibly can. Do it before reading any further.

Scoring the Exercise

Whether you scored 2 or 37 is not so important now as what you might have learned from the experience. Surprised to find that there are more things to praise than you expected? Not unusual. Remember your first score. Then pick another time of day or evening and try it again. Record your score. Try it again at still a different time of day or night. Your score should increase as your eyes open up to all the hundreds of opportunities there are to let your children know they did something right. Praising can become a routine in your household, and it's an excellent way to interact with your children on a positive level.

Possible Problems

If your children don't seem to respond very well to specific positive praise, keep at it; they will. Here's an exercise that may help a parent and a younger child begin communicating on positive terms.

★ Find a time and place where you and your child can be away from distraction—the TV off, no interruptions.

★ Explain that you two have a task, and that it is to talk about how Kathy (your child) sometimes does things wrong, and other times does things right.

★ Make sure that you have Kathy's full attention. Get and maintain eye-to-eye contact; it helps.

★ Ask Kathy to tell you one example of when she did something wrong. Ask her how that made her feel. Tell her that you understand how she would feel not so good about it.

★ Now ask her to tell you an example of when she did something right. Ask her how that made her feel. Tell her that you feel good, too, when you've done something right.

★ Ask her for another example of when she did something right. Reinforce that it was indeed a time when she did something right.

★ Tell her that from now on you're going to try to tell her when she does things right, or when she does something that makes you happy. Give her some praise for coming up with such good examples.

★ Ask her to give you two more examples of things she's done well. Explain to her that you'll notice from now on when she does things like that, and let her know that she's done a good job.

★ After you're done talking, tell her that it was really good the way she was able to give you all those examples, and that you two can have another talk again sometime.

★ **Important:** a short time after you're done talking, find something, anything, to praise about her so that she will know that you meant what you said. See if she responds better to your specific praise than before your talk. Go back and test yourself with the **15-Minute Exercise** again. Keep at it.

Age Limits to Praise

There are none. Toddlers, adolescents, teenagers and fellow adults all qualify. The things you'll find to praise will differ, and you'll need to adjust the language you use to fit the age of the person you're praising. "That was really good the way you were able to pour your own milk" might cause your teenager to suggest a therapist, but would make a younger child smile. But regardless of age, the technique and the benefits are the same.

Side Benefits of Praise

The more you make positive praising a habit, the more it will turn around and come right back at you. After some time of practicing and praising, don't be surprised to hear your kids saying things like, "Nice job of fixing up that old table Mom/Dad; sure looks nice now."

Your Expectations as a Parent

We let young people know, usually in indirect ways, what our expectations of them are. With subtle messages we set goals for our children. We want her to behave appropriately when company comes to visit, we want him to be the star of the local YMCA, and on and on.

No two people are alike, and certainly our kids are not miniature clones of us. (Sorry, Dad, despite the fact that you lettered in football and enjoyed breaking bones, your son may be more interested in fishing or music. Such is life!) Learn to set goals and expectations *with* your children, not for them. And make them realistic, attainable goals after looking at the particular abilities of your child. One example:

Last summer, my 10-year-old son wanted to be on the neighborhood soccer team; that was all, just *be* on it. Neither of his parents encouraged him to be the "star," or to score the most goals. We didn't razzle-dazzle him with tales of Pele, the superstar of soccer, nor did we invest in soccer equipment (we would have had to mortgage the dog to do it anyway). He was accepted as a member of the team, and played in almost every game. He'll never make a living as a soccer player, but *he* loved it. He set his own realistic goal and met it: he played on the neighborhood soccer team. Result? One very happy 10-year-old who felt good about himself.

Unrealistic goals can lead to frustration, hurt, anger and a feeling of worthlessness. It's better to try to do the best you can do rather than the best someone else has done. We can do well without being a star performer or President of the United States. Realistic expectations are much more likely to lead to a good self-concept.

Jobs as Building Blocks

It's good for young people to feel that they are part of the functioning of the family household. A good self-concept can be fostered by children having regular duties around the house that they are capable of carrying out. These need to be tasks to fit the age and abilities of individual children, tasks that they can accomplish and feel good about having accomplished. They need to have this feeling of importance as a member of the family. Here are some everyday examples:

- Feeding the cat, dog or goldfish every day at the same time.
- Clearing the table after dinner.
- Helping with the dishes.
- Emptying the wastebaskets on "trash day" and transporting to dumpster or curb.

- House cleaning once a week (one particular job, or one particular room).
- Cooking or being "cook's helper" on a regular basis.
- Helping with less frequent larger tasks like painting.

The idea is not to use young people as cheap labor for the jobs we adults don't like to do. Children aren't servants. The idea is to:

1. Help children feel like part of the family—everybody has some jobs to do, parents included. If parents do some of their chores while the children are doing theirs, it gets the point across better.

2. Give young people a sense of responsibility which they must learn at some point in time—earlier is better than later.

3. Instill in children the understanding that families, like communities, are places where everyone shares responsibilities and makes a contribution. The work at home needs to be done and parents need help from their children.

4. Provide yourself with some excellent opportunities to give some specific positive praise to your children for tasks accomplished and jobs well done. Even a simple "Thanks for . . ." is appreciated by each of us. No one likes to always be taken for granted.

Thoughts on Male and Female Roles

It has been found that adult females who encounter alcohol and other drug problems frequently suffer from a low self-concept. As young girls they felt that they were not as they were "supposed to be," that they were not "girl like" in their behavior and were not able to be as "feminine" as they thought they should be. Their basic uncomfortableness with themselves stemmed from how they were judged by others, from their parents especially. Then, as adults, they found that chemical use numbed these feelings of inadequacy and enabled them to finally feel "feminine" and accepted.

There is also some indication that a percentage of men who experience alcoholism as adults also experience a negative self-concept specific to their gender. These men do not feel as "manly" or powerful as they think they should. The alcohol gives them the sense of bolstered masculinity necessary for them to feel good about themselves.

For any child to be uncomfortable with themselves because of strictly defined "masculine" or "feminine" roles placed upon him or her is unfortunate. But here is another place where parents can do something to foster a good self-concept.

Accept your child for who she or he is regardless of sex or how a girl or boy is "supposed" to be. That means accepting your child's interest in ballet, sewing, basketball, carpentry or whatever. Don't discourage Ann's interest in playing football just because it would feel more comfortable for you if *Jack* played rough sports and Ann stuck to her piano lessons. Encourage your daughter to try an activity she thinks she shouldn't try or couldn't be good at because it is something that traditionally only the boys have done. Do the same for your sons.

And remember your own influence by example. Is yard work ("male" task) rewarded more than cleaning chores ("female" task)? Think about it. If you're a dad, do you do your share of laundry and cooking? Be honest. Do you expect your wife or daughter to do chores you wouldn't dream of asking your son or volunteering yourself to do? And Mom, do you take care of car maintenance and household repairs or do you find excuses to weasle out of performing these unfamiliar tasks? Practiced incompetence is something men and women engage in all the time to avoid a task they think should be done by someone of the opposite sex.

Exercise

At your next family meeting (see Chapter 4), make a list of the various chores each family member is responsible for. Make sure everyone makes a contribution, as no job done by any age is less important than another.

Next, have everyone help determine which tasks are traditionaliy "male" or "female." Place an "M" or "F" next to the appropriate tasks. (You may discover that in your family not all chores are one or the other—those get an "MF".) Decide on a time the following weekend when each person who performs one of these traditionally male or female tasks can teach a family member of the opposite sex how to accomplish the work.

On that day, the "teachers" should explain procedures patiently and encourage their "pupil's" efforts (remember she or he may be using a tool which is unfamiliar to them). In addition, the "pupils" should make a good effort to learn this new job and the skills that go with it. It is a good time for them to appreciate the conscientious job their sister or father has been doing all along. See how many of you can exchange responsibilities so that they are less sex-role oriented.

The object of this exercise is to make the time and work that goes into taking care of the family's needs of equal value. Just because Sis wipes the dishes every day, her work is not any less important than Father's monthly car wash. The more each individual's work is respected, the better everyone will feel about themselves.

(This exercise could be modified for learning about each other's free time. It's also a step toward eliminating such occurrences as women getting "taken for a ride" at the auto repair garage because they never learned anything about cars; or eliminating men being totally helpless when it comes to something as simple as sewing on a button. In short, it could be a step toward your children learning to be independent and self-sufficient, rather than role-dependent.)

Conclusion

It is understood that you'll want to correct your children when they are wrong, that you'll tell them when they've done something they are not allowed to do. That's fine—it sets limits and boundaries that young people need to have. But be careful not to let the "don'ts" have the major focus. Letting them know when they do things RIGHT can go a long way toward building a positive self-image and a healthy family.

Try the **15-Minute Exercise** today.

Quick Review

☞ Low self esteem is an identified characteristic of habitual drug abusers. Parents can do much to help their children develop positive self-concept.

☞ Parents usually give lots of negative messages to their children—the negatives and the "don'ts" need to be balanced by positive and affirming messages.

☞ Every time your child does something right, or follows a house rule, it's an opportunity for you to give them some specific positive praise.

☞ Parental praise is one way of teaching children how to look for and find the good things in other people that they themselves can praise.

☞ Realistic expectations that are tied in with the age and individual abilities of a child are likely to lead to good self-concept. Parents can learn to set goals WITH their children, not for them.

B. Expressing Feelings

Did you ever hear the old adage, "children should be seen and not heard?" Maybe that dictum is one reason why we find so many adults who are unable to express themselves. Or, how about teaching little boys that "men don't cry or show their emotions?" Or, teaching girls that "ladies never yell or get angry?" Products of this child-rearing philosophy are the walking pressure-cookers who blow up periodically, often in a violent or self-destructive way. Boys and girls who never learn to express themselves may become adults who indulge in alcohol/drugs in order to get the courage to tell others who they are and what their needs are. Witness all the adults around you who "need a drink" to really loosen up and talk openly.

A healthy way to grow up is learning how, with practice, to express one's feelings. There are very few true hermits; most of us need human contact to survive. That human contact can be greatly enhanced by learning some skills in the area of expressing ourselves.

Here are some common issues along these lines, and some suggestions for a solution. Understand these aren't the only solutions, but they may get you started thinking about your own approach to these common issues and problems.

Issue: Many of us feel that our thoughts and ideas are somehow "not worth as much" as someone else's (see section on self-concept), or that our feelings don't matter much. Do you have these feelings sometimes?

Response: By virtue of the fact that you are a member of the human race, you have a right to your thoughts, feelings, and ideas, regardless of whether someone else labels them "right" or "wrong." Your feelings belong to you, and you have the right to responsibly express them. Children have the same rights to responsibly express them. Children have the same rights. Tell your children they have that right. Encourage them to express themselves.

Issue: Traditionally, parents have all the power. That is, 100 percent of the time whatever a parent says goes, and children must accommodate or give in. If a child is female, double that effect, since women are traditionally taught to be accommodating to men.

Response: This learning pattern can set children up to become adults who accommodate, hold in their feelings, and give in routinely to the demands of others. Parents can learn to differentiate between matters where a parental decision is necessary and matters where children can be part of the decision. If young people are asked for their opinions, asked how they feel about something, put in the position of having to express what they think about something, they can learn to be expressive instead of accommodating. You can help your children learn to be expressive by encouraging them, and by listening to them. It may be the expressive boys and girls who find it easier to resist peer pressure and say "no, thanks" to drugs.

Issue: Children are frequently taught that anger and/or negative feelings are inappropriate, and that those feelings should be stifled or ignored.

Response: Rest assured that if a person strongly dislikes something someone has done, that anger *will* come out, one way or another. If the specific feelings aren't expressed to that other person, that anger will find another way to come out; violence, abusive drinking, or getting angry at some insignificant thing that has nothing to do with the original object of anger. It's far better to encourage children to let the anger out so at least it's directed at the right target. If children can let the real anger out at the time it's happening, they won't have to waste all that time with misdirected anger. Anger is not bad; it tells us when we hurt or are upset, and when we're hurting and upset we need to tell another person about it, preferably the person who is the source of the anger in the first

place. Tell your children that it's OK to have angry feelings. Resist temptations to shut off their angry feelings—listen to them. Anger is as real a feeling as happiness. Stopping the expression of anger or hurt will not stop the feelings. And sometime when your children are not feeling angry, ask them to tell you some positive or constructive ways of venting their anger or "letting off steam," and some hurtful or negative ways of letting the anger out. Talk about how the two ways are different.

Issue: Traditional thinking holds that if we express anger or displeasure to someone, we're angry at the total person. We either totally like or totally dislike someone; there is no middle ground. ground.

Response: You can dislike certain things or behaviors of another person, and still love the rest of them. You can hate the way someone folds their socks, and still love and care about the rest of them. It's important to differentiate between another person's specific behavior you don't like, and the person as a whole that you still like. Try this kind of phrase with your children:

"It really bothers me the way you keep your room in such a mess, but I still love the rest of you. (*Hug*) You need to do a better job of keeping your room straightened up—starting now."

They'll understand that kind of thinking, even though it may sound strange to you. Encourage your kids to be specific when expressing a dislike of another person. You might even ask them, "Oh, then it's only the way your brother keeps his bicycle to himself that you're angry about . . . but you still like the rest of him, don't you?" This might help clarify the point. You wouldn't want to always combine a dislike statement with a positive statement, but it's one way to help your children begin separating behaviors they don't like from the person as a whole.

Issue: "I'm happy/sad/angry/upset/frustrated/elated but I don't know what about."

Response: Try to **pinpoint** your feelings. Encourage your children to **pinpoint** their feelings. Ask them, "I know you're angry, but what *exactly* are you angry about?" It's awfully hard to express feelings if you don't know exactly what they are to begin with. Help your children to be specific about their feelings. A whiney voice and a scowl on a young child's face tells you that something's wrong. In older children, a sudden change in mood or withdrawing from conversation tell you that something's bothering them. Ask what it is. If the answer is "I don't know," ask what some things are that have just happened that would make them feel that way. Say, "I need to know what you're feeling bad about." Draw out the specifics. This applies to good feelings, too; if you're feeling especially happy, **pinpoint** why. Tell your children when they have done or said something that really makes you happy.

Issue: When we disagree with the way someone has done something, someone like our children, our statements tend to come out as sweeping statements of incontrovertible fact. Like these:

"That's a terrible thing to do."

"That was really a stupid thing to say."

"No, no, you've got it all wrong."

"That's a dumb way to think."

Response: Make "I statements." Teach your children to make "I statements." Instead of telling your kids that they did something wrong, tell them what effect it had on *you*.

"I really feel bad when I see you teasing that old dog."

"I feel mad when you pretend you didn't hear me."

"I worry when you don't come home on time."

A flat-out statement that your child was wrong can lead to a no-end argument about who is right and who is wrong. An "I statement" lets the other person know in clear terms how their actions have affected you or how their actions have made you feel. That's pretty hard to argue with.

A Note on Encouraging Expression:

A good ground rule for your family to follow is that no one laughs, ridicules, or demeans someone else's expression of feelings. If a child is "put down" or laughed at or not taken seriously for expressing him/herself, that will effectively shut the door to any future expression. Everyone has feelings, and they're not necessarily right or wrong—they're just feelings. Respect them.

Finally

There's nothing wrong, and innumerable things right, with learning to better express your love for your child and his/her love for you. One of the worst feelings a child can have is to feel unloved. When you're angry, don't confuse the temporary anger with an expression or behavior which implies that you've stopped loving your child. If that's hard to do, practice saying, "I love you, but I don't like the way that you . . ." or, "I love you, but I'm angry about. . . ."

When the anger passes, express your continuing love by saying something or with a kiss or hug. It's always OK to make sure your kids know you love them by saying so or showing it physically. Everyone wants to know *and* be told *and* be shown that they're loved.

Quick Review

☞ Children who never learn how to express themselves may become the adults who indulge in alcohol and other drugs because they lack the skills necessary to let others know who they are and what their needs are.

☞ Children can learn to be expressive if parents ask them for ideas and opinions, and if they are put in the position of having to express what they think about things which affect them.

☞ It is OK for a child to have angry feelings; they should not be ignored or packed away.

☞ Children can learn to separate specific things people do that they dislike, from a person as a whole that they still like and care about.

☞ Children who learn to pinpoint their feelings will be in much better shape to do something about them.

☞ Parents and children can learn to make "I statements" as a way of letting others know what feelings they have without having to put anyone down in the process.

☞ Let your children know you love them, even when you're angry.

C. Assertiveness for Children

The word **assertiveness** has gained an unfounded bad reputation over the years. It's a widely misunderstood term. It conjures up images of loud, pushy people, and obnoxious children. Actually, assertiveness involves a whole set of skills that can lead your children toward being happier, healthier adults. And, assertive children are those who may find it easier to resist peer pressure to smoke pot, drink, and/or experiment with pills because they've learned how to make decisions based on their *own* needs, not somebody else's. They can learn how to say "no" to things that can harm them.

Here are two extremes of behavior:

demanding	timid
pushy	meek
loud	accommodating
aggressive	hesitant
tough	shy

Assertiveness involves neither of these extremes, but falls somewhere in between. Like this:

demanding		timid
pushy		meek
loud	assertive	accommodating
aggressive		hesitant
tough		shy

Here are some examples of a young child asking for something.

demanding **pushy** **loud** **aggressive** **tough**	**timid** **meek** **accommodating** **hesitant** **shy**	**ASSERTIVE**
"I'm going out to play." (screaming and stomping feet)	(using a whiney voice) "Can . . . I go out . . . and play?" (looking at the floor) "All the other kids are."	(in a normal tone of voice) "I've finished my chores now . . . I'd like to go out and play."
"Buy me one of those dolls! I get to have one!!" (threat—I'll tantrum if I don't get one)	(whining) "Geee, I *never* get any fancy dolls like that one."	"That doll is very pretty. I'd really like to have one some day."
(yelling) "I want a kitten!! You said we can have one, and I want *that* one!!! Buy me that kitty Mom, buy it, buy it!!!"	(pouting) "I know you don't want a cat . . . we probably can't get one . . . but . . ."	"I really like that kitten, Mom. We talked about having a cat before. Do you think we can get it?"

Fill in some examples of your own here:

Exercise

Practice asking for things assertively with your children. Read the above examples to your kids. Then ask them to think of something they would like to ask for and have them ask for it in the three different ways. Ask them how it felt asking in the three different ways. Tell them how you reacted to each of the three ways. Think up an example yourself, and ask your children for something in the three ways. Ask them how it sounded to them. Have them think of some more examples and do it several times.

When there is an occasion where your child asks for something unassertively, stop them and ask them to remember when you did this exercise. Then ask them to restate the question using assertive language.

The Art of Saying 'No'

With many things in a child's life, there is no choice. A child must go to school; a child's job may be to carry out the trash; maybe there is a house rule about no television until homework is done. These are not matters of choice, but simply things that must be done.

But there is another, much larger, category of things that don't absolutely *have* to be done. These are matters of choice. Things like whether or not to sign up for sports teams or Cub Scouts or Girl Scouts, whether or not to go to a birthday party a child has been invited to, or what clothes to wear on a not-so-important occasion are not absolutes; they are matters of choice.

A stern, authoritative parent who hands down absolute decisions even on matters of choice, who is "always right" no matter what, who has all the power 100 percent of the time, can over the years raise children who are very adept at accommodating, holding in their feelings, and giving in to the demands of others. It is a learned pattern.

It can be dangerous training when applied to kids and drug use. A child thoroughly trained by a parent to always be the one who must give in to demands may be the child who doesn't know how to say NO to drugs. Peer pressure on your child can be as strong as your insistence on always being "right."

Keep in mind I'm not suggesting turning the tables totally and having children run families; that would be as big a mistake as the "WHAT I SAY GOES!!!" parenting style. Children can learn to responsibly and assertively say NO in matters of choice.

It's very simple. You can help your children learn to:

★ Figure out what their needs are.

★ Distinguish *their* needs from what others are telling them they should need, want, or do.

★ Make decisions based on their *own* needs, and not the needs of others. And, in cases where those two things conflict, say "No, thanks, I'd rather not."

Younger Child Example

Parent: Tells Rebecca that she will be taking piano lessons starting next week. After all, all the Smiths have learned piano, and it's a family tradition. She'll love it.

Unassertive Child: May shrink away and pout, may go ahead but do the worst possible job so the teacher gives up on her, may cry and scream, may whine about not wanting to but do it anyway, may like playing piano but always feel resentful about being forced into it and never do as well as she could.

Assertive Child: 1. Figures out that she has absolutely no interest in piano, and would be extremely bored by it. 2. Realizes that *her* needs are very different from her *parents'* needs. 3. Responds by saying, "Thanks anyway, but I don't want to take piano lessons now; maybe later on." Or, maybe she agrees to a trial period, but makes it clear that this is a short term solution.

☛ Would Rebecca have the right to express herself like this in your family? What would you do next?

Older Child Example

Parent: Tells Michael that he's going to try out for the football team, that his father played football, and it's where a boy learns to be a **man**.

Unassertive Child: May go out for football but do poorly on purpose so he won't make the team; that way he won't get into an argument with his father. May agree to go out for the team, but take his anger out on the kid next door or a younger brother or sister.

Assertive Child: 1. Figures out that he has hobbies that interest him far more than football, and that he never did like the violence of the game. 2. Realizes that *his* needs are very different from his *parents'* needs. 3. Responds by saying, "Sorry if this disappoints you, Dad, but football never has appealed to me at all. I've got lots of other things that I like to do much better."

☛ Would Michael have the right to express himself like this in your family? What would you do next?

A Final Example

Friend: Asks Jeff if he wants to try some "pot" (marijuana), and explains that it'll make him feel real good, and besides, all the kids are doing it.

Unassertive Child: May try it because he doesn't want to seem "out of it," or the only one who's never tried it—may smoke just to get the other kid off his back; it's the easiest way to get rid of him.

Assertive Child: 1. Figures out that he already feels fine, and has no interest in trying a street drug where he can never be really sure of what's in it. 2. Realizes that *his* needs are different from his *friend's* needs. 3. Responds by saying, "No, thanks, I don't want to mess with that stuff. I feel fine enough just like I am."

☛ Can you see your child being assertive in a situation like this?

Encouraging

☛ With non-mandatory items where there is choice, try *asking* your son or daughter what s/he would think of joining the Scouts, taking lessons, going out for a sport, etc.

☛ Explain the difference between things they must do (go to school, dry the dishes, clean their room once a week, etc.), and matters of choice. Give them lots of examples, and ask them to give you some examples.

☛ Tell your kids that in matters of choice, they have the RIGHT to be assertive and responsibly say "No thanks."

☛ Help your children figure out the difference between *their* needs and what somebody else thinks they should need or want to do. Ask them for examples of when somebody else (a parent, a teacher, a commercial on TV, a friend) thought they needed something that they didn't.

Exercise

1. **demanding**
   pushy
   loud
   aggressive
   tough

2. **timid**
   meek
   accommodating
   hesitant
   shy

3. **ASSERTIVE**

Have your child think up three examples of matters of choice. Take each example and ask your child what they would think about doing this particular thing. Have your child say "No" three different ways to each of your questions.

Ask how it felt to respond in each of the three ways. Tell them how the three responses sounded to you. Tell them which of the three responses you'd be most likely to actually **listen** to.

If you have a middle school or older child, here are some suggestions for them to practice their assertiveness if someone offers them a joint, and they really don't want to smoke it.[3]

Throw Them a Curve

"Is it a low-tar joint? I only smoke low-tar joints.

"I don't think I should. I got an overdose of marker fumes in art class today."

"No. I can't believe this is happening. All week I kept thinking how nice it would be to smoke a little weed after school. And on the day I'm offered a joint, I have to go home and reorganize my sock drawer."

"I can't today. I'm taking the pilot's test for my blimp license."

"I'd better not. I just did five raisinettes."

Give It to Them Straight

"No thanks, I don't want to smoke."

"I don't feel like getting high this afternoon."

"I'm not into body pollution."

"I'm kind of depressed, so I don't think I should try it today."

"Not today."

"Nope, don't want the hassle."

A Note to Kids:

Remember: turning down the chance to use a drug (tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or anything else) is your **right**. Any friends who lean on you about your decision are chipping away at your rights as a free individual. You can remind them of that if they get on your back.

We've looked at asking for things assertively, and responsibly and assertively saying "**no**." But assertiveness also means:

★ being able to accept compliments and feel good about yourself;

★ being in charge of yourself, being responsible for your life; and

★ knowing your rights: the right to your own ideas, thoughts, and feelings; the right to responsibly express those feelings and thoughts; the right to be happy; the right to like yourself; the right to be respected; the right to be yourself.

Tell your children that they have these rights.

Quick Review

☞ Assertiveness is a skill your children can learn, and which could in the future enable them to resist peer pressure to indulge in and/or abuse alcohol and other drugs.

☞ Practicing assertive behavior leads your children to make decisions based on *their* needs, not on what somebody else thinks they need.

☞ In matters of choice, your children can learn to responsibly say "No, thanks," instead of automatically giving in to outside pressure.

☞ Assertiveness for your children means that they learn to take charge of their lives, and that they know their rights.

For a more detailed look at assertiveness for children, see *The Mouse, The Monster and Me* in the reference section in back.

3. From *THIS SIDE UP, Making Decisions About Drugs*, 1978. Highly recommended for young people being faced with decisions about drugs. See readling list in back.

D. Making Decisions and Solving Problems

Making decisions is never very easy, is it? Think about some hard decisions you've had to make lately. Then imagine being seven, nine or eleven again. Decisions were just as hard (if not harder) to make then, weren't they?

In the introduction to this book we said that your children are going to make decisions by themselves outside of your parental influence. Some of those decisions may involve their approach to drinking alcohol, or using drugs like marijuana. Those are serious decisions, and your children can benefit from having a systematic method for approaching their decision making.

What follows is a step-by-step procedure for making a decision and solving problems which children, teenagers and adults alike can learn to utilize. Practice it yourself first, then help your children through the steps one by one. It works.

Steps in Decision-Making

1. Define the problem clearly.
2. Set a goal, YOUR goal.
3. List the alternatives.
4. Look at the possible consequences.
5. Make your decision, and DO it.

Discussion of Individual Steps

1. Define the problem clearly.

State the problem or dilemma as clearly as you can, and be as specific as possible. Here's an example of a problem for one ten-year-old boy:

General: "I don't like the baseball team. I think I may quit."
Specific: "The coach makes me play 2nd base, and I'd rather play left field."

A general feeling that "something's wrong" is very difficult to deal with. A clear and specific problem statement can much more easily be dealt with and solved. When going through this step with your children, don't quit until the problem has been narrowed down to something very specific. Some larger problems may have to be broken down into smaller, more digestible parts so they can be dealt with one at a time, but the point is still the same: be as specific as you can about the problem to solve.

2. Set a goal, YOUR goal.

OK, so you've got a problem to solve or a decision to make. What are you going to do about it? Ask yourself (or your children), "If you could magically change anything about the situation, *how* would you change it?" "How would you make it different if you had the power to wave a magic wand and make it change?" You need to figure out exactly what it is that you are trying to accomplish or achieve. Continuing our example, the goal might be:

"I want to switch to playing left field. I'd be happier, and I think I'd be a bigger help to the team."

Without such a clear and specific goal, your efforts to do anything will be unfocussed and scattered in many directions. Once you have a clear and specific goal, you can make plans to get to that goal, and concentrate all your efforts and energy in *one* direction. The goal you set needs to be YOURS, not somebody else's, and not what you think somebody else is expecting of you. Make it a goal that will please *you*.

3. List the alternatives.

What are all your possible alternative actions? What can you do about your problem? Whether they are positive, negative, easy or hard, pleasing or displeasing to you, don't judge them at this point; just list them. All of them. Some people call this "brainstorming." List all the possible things you could do to get you to your goal. Like this:

a. Quit the baseball team.
b. Talk to the coach about playing left field and hope he agrees.
c. Demand to be put in left field, or threaten to quit the team.
d. Beat up the left fielder so I'll have to take over for him.
e. Ask the left fielder if he'd like to trade left field for 2nd base for a couple of games to see how it goes. If he agrees, then get an OK from the coach.

Remember, these aren't good or bad at this point; they're just possibilities.

4. Look at the possible consequences.

Take each alternative (or possible action) you've listed, and list the possible consequences of each of them. What are all the possible things that could happen as a result of taking each of the alternative actions? Again, put down everything, positive or negative, and don't judge them at this point; just list them. When going through this section with your children, let them do as good a job as they can first, then offer some help in thinking up some more possible consequences to their actions. Follow the samples by starting each entry with "I choose to . . . ," as it drives home the point that *we* are responsible for what *we* do. Here's how it goes:

Samples

MY ACTION ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
a. I choose to quit the baseball team.	✓ I wouldn't get to play left field. ✓ I wouldn't get to bat, either. ✓ I wouldn't get to be with my friends. ✓ I have more time to go fishing.
b. I choose to talk to the coach about playing left field and hope he agrees.	✓ He might let me play left field. ✓ He might not. ✓ He might tell me to mind my own business.
c. I choose to demand to be put in left field, or threaten to quit the team.	✓ It might work. ✓ The coach might get mad at me. ✓ The coach might say, "OK, so quit!"
d. I choose to beat up the left fielder so I'll have to take over for him.	✓ He might beat me up. ✓ The coach would be very mad. ✓ My parents would get very mad. ✓ It mig[illegible] work. ✓ I might g[illegible] kicked off the team.
e. I choose to ask the left fielder to trade left field for 2nd base for a couple of games to see how it goes. If he agrees, then get an OK from the coach.	✓ He might agree to let us do it. ✓ Maybe he wouldn't. ✓ The coach might let us do it because we'd already agreed to it.

Now ask yourself which of the above alternatives stands the best chance of accomplishing your clear and specific goal? Eliminate the ones that don't look like they'd get you there and would only cause more problems. Sift out the best one or two possibilities. Like this:

MY ACTION ALTERNATIVES	POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES
b. I choose to talk to the coach about playing left field and hope he agrees.	✔ He might let me play left field. ✔ He might not. ✔ He might tell me to mind my own business.
e. I choose to ask the left fielder if he'd like to trade left field for 2nd base for a couple of games to see how it goes. If he agrees, then get an OK from the coach.	✔ He might agree to let us do it. ✔ Maybe he wouldn't. ✔ The coach might let us do it because we'd already agreed to it.

Now you've narrowed your alternatives down to the **best** ones, the ones that stand the best chance of getting you to your goal. Now look at the possible consequences:

Are you willing to live with those consequences? Are the risks involved worth the possible benefits of getting to your goal? Are you ready to take responsibility for your actions?

Don't be scared off at this point. Remember: **Without taking some risks, nothing will ever change.**

5. Make your decision.

Out of this narrowed down group of alternative actions, pick the one action which:

a. Stands the best chance of getting you to your goal;
b. That has possible consequences you're willing to live with; and
c. You are ready to take responsibility for yourself.

In our example, the final choice would probably be:

e. Ask the left fielder if he'd like to trade left field for 2nd base for a couple of games to see how it goes. If he agrees, then get an OK from the coach.

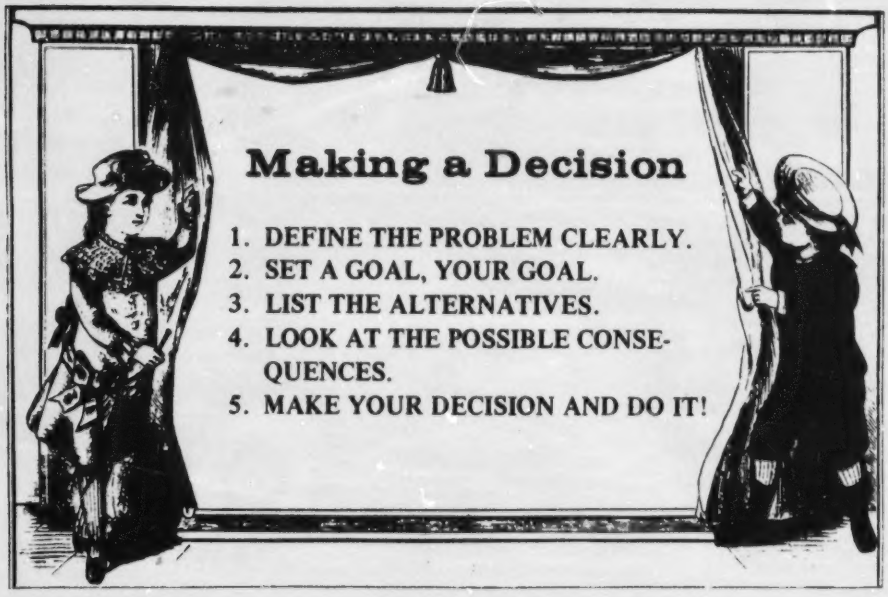
Your decision has been made. Implement it. It's your decision; be proud of it.

This procedure may appear to be very time consuming. I assure you it is not. For simple decisions, this process can be run through in your head in a matter of minutes. For more complex problems, you'll need to actually write it out, but it still won't take much time. And besides, a methodical approach to problem solving makes sense; what other ways are there? Make quick, spur-of-the-moment decisions? Do nothing and let others make your decisions for you? Neither of these pects will render decisions which are likely to please you, let alone solve the initial problem. Try the methodical approach—it works.

Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it in half for ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS and POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES. Map out a problem or a decision that you are facing. See how it works. Then help your children through a decision-making process using this method to solve a problem they're facing. What might be really interesting is to state a problem or decision that you are facing, and have your children help you through the steps; you may be surprised at how helpful they can be.

A Final Note

It's so easy for a parent to make decisions *for* a child. It's hard to watch a youngster painfully struggling with a problem, and not do anything to help. Give them this tool to use. Help them formulate their possible alternative actions. **But don't do it all for them!** Remember: your children will have to make decisions on their own outside of the home, and away from your parental influence. If you make all their decisions for them, what chance have they got to make good decisions when they're on their own? Give them the responsibility for making decisions while they are at home under your guidance. Give them the freedom to try out their decisions and chosen actions. Let them fail or succeed with *their* decisions. Then, at the very least, you'll have given them some practice at the skill of making hard decisions, a skill they can use when they're outside the home.


Making a Decision
1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM CLEARLY.
2. SET A GOAL, YOUR GOAL.
3. LIST THE ALTERNATIVES.
4. LOOK AT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES.
5. MAKE YOUR DECISION AND DO IT!

When the time comes for your children to make decisions about smoking pot, drinking, experimenting with drugs, or using drugs regularly, they'll make those decisions for themselves. But, if you have helped your children practice making decisions in the home, they will have learned a systematic method for making decisions based on looking at the consequences first, and thinking actions out before they take them. It'll come in handy; count on it.

Cut out the sign at the top of the page and give it to your children to pin on their wall.

Quick Review

☞ Children who learn a systematic approach to making decisions will be equipped with a highly valuable tool to use when they face eventual alcohol/drug decisions.

☞ Learning a decision making method makes sense. It's much better than making slightly confused or spur-of-the-moment decisions, or just letting others make those decisions for you.

☞ If parents make all the decisions for their children while they are in the home, what chance have they got to make good decisions when they're on their own outside the home?

☞ Parents can give their children the responsibility for making decisions of their own while they are in the home under parental influence. It's good practice.

E. Accepting Responsibility for One's Actions

Scene: Parent reading a book, child in next room playing.

Action: There is a loud crash. Parent jumps up and races into the next room to investigate. Parent finds child standing next to a table lamp which is lying broken on the floor. Child has very innocent look on face.

Dialogue:

Parent: "What happened?"

Child: "The lamp broke?"

Translation: "The lamp jumped off the table and broke itself."

This scene happened between my daughter and me a number of years ago. At age four she made little or no connection between her **action** of scaling the end table, and the **consequence** of the lamp falling off and breaking. Are there some examples of a similar nature that involve your children?

There is a basic law of physics which states that "for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." The usual example given is the "kick-back" or recoil of a gun when it is fired. There is a similar law at work in our lives which is simply this: "For every action we take, there will be a result or consequence."

If I choose to drive home drunk after a party, my consequence may be that I'll luck out and make it home, or my consequence may be a wrecked car and a fractured clavicle (or worse). If I choose to give my daughter a hug, my consequence may be a smiling 12-year-old who returns the hug some time in the future.

Children need to understand this basic law of life, and that what they do affects others around them. Children need to be able to connect their **actions** with the **results** of those actions. This may all sound absurdly simple, but it is a crucial aspect of learning that is often overlooked.

Exercise

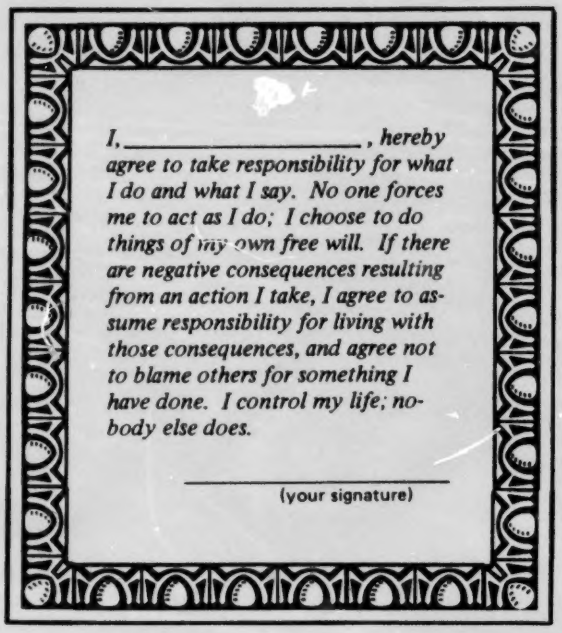
Try this exercise with your children. It is designed to start them thinking about consequences before they take their actions. Have your kids fill in one example, then fill one in yourself. They will be encouraged by your participation in the exercise. For starters, kids can list activities they enjoy doing, but they should also list some ACTIONS they're not sure about liking, or definitely don't like. Have them list some ACTIONS which are likely to result in negative consequences, as well as those that might result in positive consequences. Follow the samples by starting each entry with "I choose to . . . ," as it drives home the point that *we* are responsible for what we do.

MY ACTION	THE POSSIBLE RESULTS OR CONSEQUENCES
Sample: I choose to join the baseball team.	✔ Boys may tease me because "girls aren't supposed to like baseball." ✔ I may have a lot of fun. ✔ I may not be very good at it. ✔ I may make some new friends.
Sample: I choose to tease the dog by taking away its bone.	✔ Nothing will happen. ✔ The dog will play with me. ✔ The dog will eat my hand. ✔ The dog will bark, but not bite.
I choose to:	

Review the work you've just done with your children, and in the process explain to them that the kind of thinking that's just gone on (thinking about possible results *before* acting) is good thinking. Explain that they need to do that kind of thinking when they're making a decision about whether or not to do a particular thing. It just takes a few seconds to think up possible consequences to your actions, and it's the first step in accepting responsibility for them.

Accepting Responsibility

I have a contract to propose, a contract that you, as an adult, can make with the rest of the world. Here it is:



I, _____, hereby agree to take responsibility for what I do and what I say. No one forces me to act as I do; I choose to do things of my own free will. If there are negative consequences resulting from an action I take, I agree to assume responsibility for living with those consequences, and agree not to blame others for something I have done. I control my life; nobody else does.

_____
(your signature)

If I sign this contract, it means that when I choose to drive home drunk from a party, and the result is a wrecked car, I will not blame the fog, the person who threw the party, the brewing company, or the car for having too small a brake pedal. It means that I agree to live with the consequences of my actions. Would you sign this contract? If not, why not?

The same precept applies to children. One way you can teach children to accept the consequences of their actions is to let them *experience* those consequences. I am not suggesting that you allow your children to play in traffic so they can experience being run over by a truck. I am suggesting that a parent should resist the temptation to repeatedly rescue their kids from the natural consequences of their actions. Actions like thes :

- Not sharing a toy with a friend.
- Sticking their tongue out at Grandma.
- Petting the cat backwards.
- Teetering on the two back legs of the kitchen chair, daring it to fall out from under them.
- Being picky at dinner and not wanting to eat what's been cooked.

Let your children experience the consequences of actions like these, and the thousands of other actions they take which will not result in permanent disfugurement or exile. And after they've become very hungry because they refused to eat what was cooked, or after the kitchen chair dumps them on the floor, reinforce and explain to them in a non-lecturing way that they would do well to think of the possible consequences *before* they do things. It wasn't the cat's fault, or the chair's fault; they need to assume responsibility for what *they* did. Don't twist the knife, just make it a short, simple reminder. It gets parents out of the business of rescuing, of following our children around with a pillow to cushion them when they fall. And it may start kids thinking more about their actions and the possible consequences.

If you have middle school aged children or teenagers, have them fill in all the possible consequences they can think of for the actions below. Then ask them if they're willing to live with the possible consequences of these actions. Tell them that these are the kinds of actions you expect them to think about ahead of time.

MY ACTION	THE POSSIBLE RESULTS OR CONSEQUENCES
I choose to smoke pot before school with that friend who's been asking me to join him/her.	
I choose to drink lots of beer at the next party I go to.	

Quick Review

- Children who learn to connect their actions with the results or consequences of those actions are on their way to some clear thinking when it comes to their eventual alcohol/drug decisions.
- Even though it's tempting to want to rescue them, parents can learn to allow their children to experience the results of their actions.
- Parents can encourage their children to practice thinking of possible results or consequences before they take their actions.

4. Parenting Methods

Now that you've read and worked your way this far, and worked on the skills section with your children, it's time for a break. And there's an important point to be made here: put the book down for a while, and have some fun—that's part of being a parent, too. I'm reminded of a scene from a 1940's movie where a mother and father are racing about, bumping into each other, desperately searching for their "Parent's Manual" to find out what to do next because their four-year-old has just behaved in an unusual way.

Books on parenting, including this one, are not fountains of endless knowledge or the ultimate authority; they are only sources for ideas to start you in your own directions.

So for now, enough of putting our families under the microscope. Go have some fun. Declare it "Unbirthday" day and celebrate with ice cream, cake and balloons. Draw straws to see who in your family gets to be king or queen for the day, including possibly their favorite thing to eat, and/or their favorite place to go. Go to a movie with your children. Go to a zoo. Go for a hike. Have an adventure. Play "hooky" from the routine and do something unusual. But have some fun with your children. Then, after a breather, you'll feel more like diving into the second half of this book.

☛ What are some things that your parents do that you like, or that please you?

4th and 5th graders:

"The way they say nice things when I do something good. The way they help me cope with my problems."

"Take walks and try to have open feelings."

"I like it when my dad helps me with my paper route."

"When something isn't working, that they try to suggest many things that might help."

"They pay attention to me."

"Listen to me when I talk."

7th graders:

"Trust me to be responsible."

"When they let me do stuff that I can do myself."

"They let me make my own decisions."

"Take me skiing, or fishing, or camping, climbing, or swimming."

See Appendix B in back for a complete listing of responses to this question.

What follows is a description of some field-tested parenting methods and suggestions for coping with common situations that families face. Remember to return to Chapter 2 and take the Parent's Self-Test again from time to time.

A. The Family Meeting

This concept is very simple: Once a week, every week, no matter what, the whole family gets together for a family meeting. This applies to all families—single parent families, two-parent families, families with one child or eleven. Lots can happen; silly things, serious things, or things just for fun. It all depends on the family's needs that week. It emphasizes that nobody is alone; there is a family here that cares about each other. It can strengthen and solidify a family. It can accomplish a lot of good things.

Benefits

★ Children can feel like they have some say in deciding matters that affect the whole family. That can help build self-concept.

★ Touchy issues can get talked out before someone explodes in anger.

★ Family members can get a feeling of being in this thing *together*, not as separate people by themselves.

★ Parents can remind children of good things they've done, or things they've done well in the past week.

★ Young people can begin to learn how their wants, needs, demands, opinions and actions affect other people.

★ Problems can get solved before they become much larger problems.

★ Families can experience "pulling together" to help each other out, instead of pulling in opposite directions.

★ "The family" can be strengthened and given significance as an important way of life.

Ground Rules

Here are some suggested ground rules for the Family Meeting. Feel free to change them, modify them, or make up your own. But this would be a good place to start.

Time: Once a week, every week. Pick a day, it doesn't matter which one as long as it's the same one every week. Right after dinner is a good time; that's usually when everybody is at home and available. The Family Meeting gets scheduled in before anything else on anybody's schedule; it takes priority.

Setting: No interruptions are allowed. Pick one person to answer the door and phone. Anyone wanting to interrupt the meeting will be told to call back later. Have that person take messages.

Length: The smaller your children are, the shorter the meeting should be. Judge for yourself. Try not to let the meeting run past 30 minutes. When your children reach the upper elementary grades, consider stretching the meetings a bit, but not much longer.

Children's Issues: Each child would have a certain amount of time to talk, to say whatever is on his/her mind, without interruption or criticism. This is *their* time to have center stage and everyone else's attention. If they seem unwilling to say anything at first, you might ask them what they did last week, or if there is anything they would like to change in the household. It's their opportunity to get anything "off their chests."

Parent's Issues: This is a great opportunity for parents to let the children in on what they're having to deal with lately, explained in simplified terms. Mom may be thinking of changing jobs or going back to school, and it's worrying her a lot. Dad may be thinking of financial matters and wondering how to buy groceries, pay the rent, pay the bills, and have anything left over to do something with. Whatever it is, if it's an issue that concerns you as a parent, share your concern with your children. Ask them if they have any thoughts or ideas about what to do. If it's a problem they can't solve, they can at least offer suggestions and no one will have to feel as if they were all alone in coping with it. It helps get across the message that you're all in this thing together.

Family Issues: There are dozens of issues which affect the whole family: moving to a new town or a new house or apartment, how to spend a $92 tax return, how to spend a vacation (or indeed *if* a vacation can be afforded at all), how the extra room or extra space will be used, and on and on. It also seems that everyone has their own ideas about what the household needs next; a bicycle, a TV, a sewing machine, better tools, car repairs, braces for teeth, etc. Unless your family name is Rockefeller, most families can't possibly satisfy all those "wants" at the same time. So you make a plan. Make a list, and discuss and decide who's item gets attention first, second, third, etc. Maybe you can take care of one item every few months or so; maybe it will take longer. Let the children be part of deciding which items go in which order on the list.

Rules:

a. Everyone gets an opportunity to talk, to state their feelings or whatever, without interruption or criticism while they're talking.

b. Parents will decide which things are to be voted on by everyone, and on which items parents or children alone will make the decisions.

c. Family members will be open and honest (see section on expressing feelings).

Sound a little strange? Maybe, but if it works, who cares? The Family Meeting is certainly not a mandatory item, but why not try it out? Set your own rules and see how it goes. Young children may have some very interesting and revealing things to say, as young people tend to be incredibly blunt. And if you establish the Family Meeting as a routine, it can be very useful when your kids reach adolescence and begin to establish themselves as individuals. Then, instead of the family taking on increasingly less importance through the teenage years, it might be one way that the family can retain its importance as a unit of caring people, and as a solid foundation in your children's lives.

If you think that your kids would not have anything to say at a family meeting, see Appendix B for a look at what some average children had to say about their parents, and about their needs as children.

In addition to family meetings, you might also try having dinner time be a time for everyone to discuss what they're doing, how they're feeling, plans for the evening or weekend, help they need, how the day was, fun they've had, etc. This requires that the TV be turned off, no getting up and down from the table, phone calls returned later, and no friends interrupting. Besides a time to eat, dinner time can also be a relaxed time for sharing and family fun.

B. Talking About Alcohol/Drugs

The Door Will Remain Shut Unless You Open It

One way some parents deal with what they perceive to be the "drug problem" is to avoid the topic altogether, never bring it up, and hope that it never involves their children. The thinking is, "if I ignore it, maybe it'll go away." Ostriches are supposed to do this a lot. Actually, they're wise enough not to. So, remember, your children will eventually be confronted with alcohol/drug decisions whether you choose to bring the subject up or not.

Parents would do well to try to establish a mood of openness around the subject. Maybe then kids would not feel a need to sneak, conceal, camouflage, and hide their alcohol/drug knowledge and use. Let your children know that you are aware of drugs being passed around at school, or drinking at parties, or marijuana being smoked on the way to and from school. Let your statement of awareness serve as an opening in the wall—a chance for you to ask your children what they think about alcohol/drug use by their peers. It's a beginning. This is especially true for students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades, when experimentation with alcohol and other drugs often occurs.

Listening

If your children have opinions about alcohol/drug use, listen to them. Let them explain their perspective and make them aware that you care about what they think. Try to remember what it was like when you were young and you had an opinion that perhaps differed from your parents. Put yourself in your son's or daughter's shoes for a moment, and imagine what it must be like for them. Open your ears; your children may be asking for some guidance from you.

And if it's hard to just sit and listen, bite your tongue or eat a handful of crackers. Do what you must to keep quiet for a while. It may help to repeat to yourself what you just heard from your children. Think about both the positive *and* negative aspects of your child's opinion and what it means for them. Don't simply bide your time waiting to respond—listen; understand what's being said and then give yourself time to develop a response. Expect the same from your child. Both of you have important things to say.

Credibility

Get your facts straight. If there's a particular drug you're worried about (marijuana or PCP for example) dig up all the factual information you can. Visit a local drug information center or write for the information you need (see Reference Section in back). The factual information is out there waiting for you. There is no more ludicrous a scene than a youngster arguing that "there's absolutely no danger in marijuana," and a parent responding "marijuana will turn you into a degenerate and babbling idiot." You'd both be wrong. Everyone needs to get their facts straight. Make sure you know what you're talking about.

Credibility also comes into play when a misinformed parent passes on "scare tactic" information to a child such as, "if you drink, you'll get sick and throw up," or "if you smoke marijuana, you'll feel terrible and you won't be able to quit!" Your child may believe you but if s/he does experiment with those drugs and feels *good* or *likes it,* you've blown your credibility. Your child's conclusion? "Mom and Dad don't know what they're talking about." Your kids will tend to not take your warn-

ings seriously in the future. Stick to the facts. If you don't know the facts, find out.

Straight Talk

I recently viewed a film on marijuana use by middle and high school students. A mother whose daughter smoked a lot of marijuana was interviewed. The parent explained that she thought it probably wasn't the best idea, but she went along with it because her daughter threatened to run away if she were disciplined. The mother was afraid of the consequences of being an active parent (i.e., she feared her daughter's threat) and became an ineffective friend. Out of fear she abdicated her parental responsibility. It was a classic case of the tail wagging the dog.

Parents who try to be their child's best friend or "buddy" are missing the mark. Being a parent involves guiding, shaping, helping, and setting reasonable limits to behavior. Children want and need this from parents—they get other valuable things from their friends.

There is a middle ground between the idea of very strict, rigid parenting and the extreme permissiveness advocated by some. The middle ground could be called being a **rational** parent. It involves parents and children learning to take into account each other's perspectives and feelings.

It also involves setting reasonable limits to behavior. Let your children know in clear terms what your expectations of them are regarding alcohol/drug use. Let them understand clearly what the rules are in your household. Go ahead; set limits, make rules, and define boundaries. But don't make them out of rock or steel; make them out of something flexible, but strong. Then make it clear that behavior outside those limits is not acceptable. Whether they agree with your rules or not, everyone can profit from clearly understanding where the limits are.

'Absolutely Not!!' vs. Being Rational

Children frequently look to parents to set limits and rules, but what form those rules take is important. Make the limits and boundaries you set reasonable and attainable.

One method of laying down rules is to say "you will absolutely never, ever use alcohol or other drugs!!!" But how realistic or attainable is that goal? A more rational approach would be to explain something like this:

Growing up is hard; sometimes it even hurts. You have lots of things to learn about, to figure out, and lots of problems to solve. Alcohol or other drugs will not help you figure all those things out, nor will it help you solve any problems. In fact, using alcohol or other drugs will probably get in the way, and make growing up just that much harder. You need all of your senses to learn, to grow, and to figure things out for yourself. This time in your life is not a good time to be using alcohol or any other drugs. So here are the rules we're going to have in our house. . . . (i.e., you can drink, but only when we serve it to you, or at special occasions. If you drive the car you may not drink or use other drugs. Smoking is allowed only. . . . If you use the car you must. . . . etc.)
much more receptive to rational people and rational statements than they are to a hammer pounding rules into their heads.

Fair Discipline

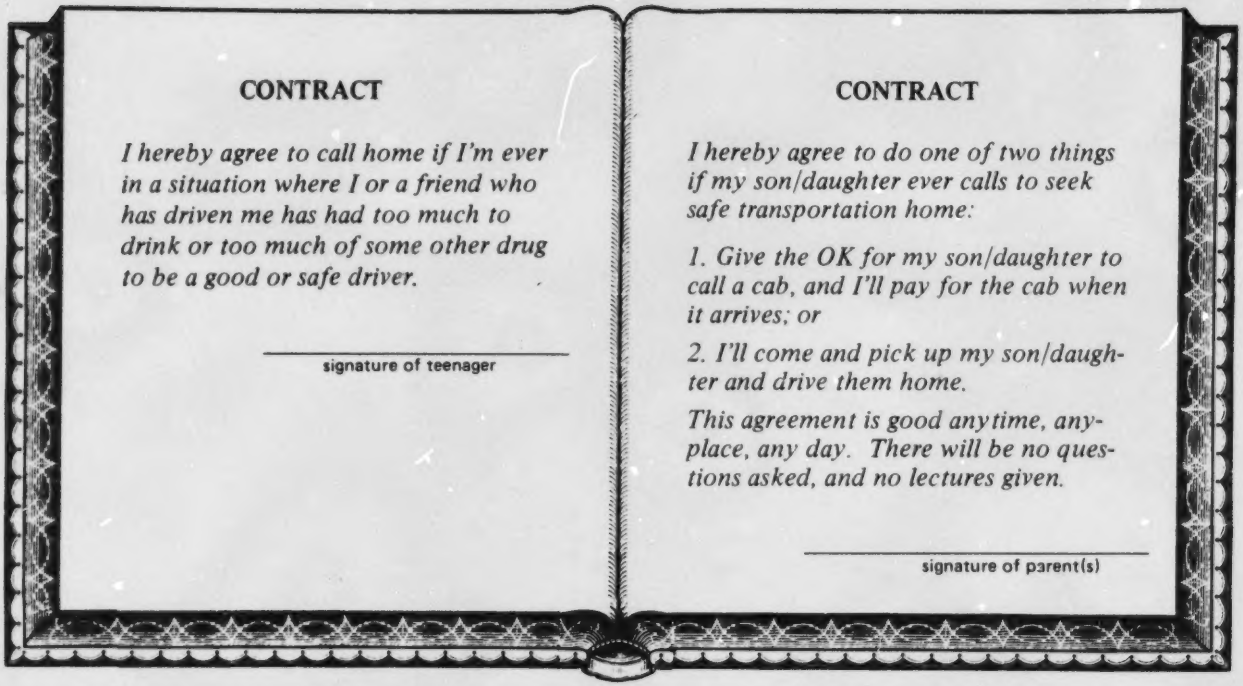
Once specific and clear rules and boundaries have been set for your household, let your children know that there will be consequences if the rules are broken, and remind them that they are responsible for their actions (see Chapter 3, Section E). Tell them *ahead of time* what some of the consequences might be so they can take that into consideration when they make their alcohol/drug use decisions.

Keep your discipline consistent with the infraction. Taking away a teenager's record albums or denying them baseball practice have little or nothing to do with getting drunk at a rock concert. If your youngster wants to attend rock concerts with friends, unescorted by a parent, let them know that they may have that privilege only if they stick to some simple rules, and that privilege will be lost if they don't comply. It would be fair discipline in this case to have your youngsters *earn* back that privilege by showing over a set period of time that they can comply with other household alcohol/drug rules.

The Contract

When your teenagers are of driving age, you could utilize the following contract. It's an agreement between you and your sons and daughters to do certain things should they ever find themselves in a situation where someone has had too much to drink, or too much of some other drug, to be a good driver. Your child might find him/herself "stuck" in just such a situation, and this could be the way out. This contract could be very important if one of your household rules is "no drinking and driving" at all.

Parents: Cut out the contract or make up your own using words that appeal to you. But here's the important thing: when your teenagers take you up on the offer, do whatever you have to do (chew


CONTRACT
I hereby agree to call home if I'm ever in a situation where I or a friend who has driven me has had too much to drink or too much of some other drug to be a good or safe driver.
signature of teenager
CONTRACT
I hereby agree to do one of two things if my son/daughter ever calls to seek safe transportation home:
1. Give the OK for my son/daughter to call a cab, and I'll pay for the cab when it arrives; or
2. I'll come and pick up my son/daughter and drive them home.
This agreement is good anytime, anyplace, any day. There will be no questions asked, and no lectures given.
signature of parent(s)

your nails or bite your fist) to keep from lecturing them or making them feel guilty. In fact, if you say anything, it would be a great opportunity to give your teenager some specific positive praise for *thinking*. It's cause for congratulations, not a lecture. Talk to them the next day about how they got themselves into the situation. But, for the moment, your primary goal is simply to get your kids home safe.

Make a Plan and Practice

When your children are of the age when they may begin to receive offers to try various drugs (perhaps when they enter middle school), help them formulate a plan **ahead of time** for how to deal with the situation. Ask them exactly what they would say if they were offered some drugs to experiment with. Role play it out with them—you play the friend who's offering some pot or some "ups" to your child. Have a brother or sister play the part. Ask your child to invite a good friend over, and have the two of them change roles back and forth. See how many different ways they can devise to deal with an offer of drugs. You can bet it's going to happen eventually, and role playing the situation out beforehand, or having a plan is an excellent way to prepare.

For examples of good "one-liners" for kids to use to say "no, thanks" to an offer of drugs, see page 22.

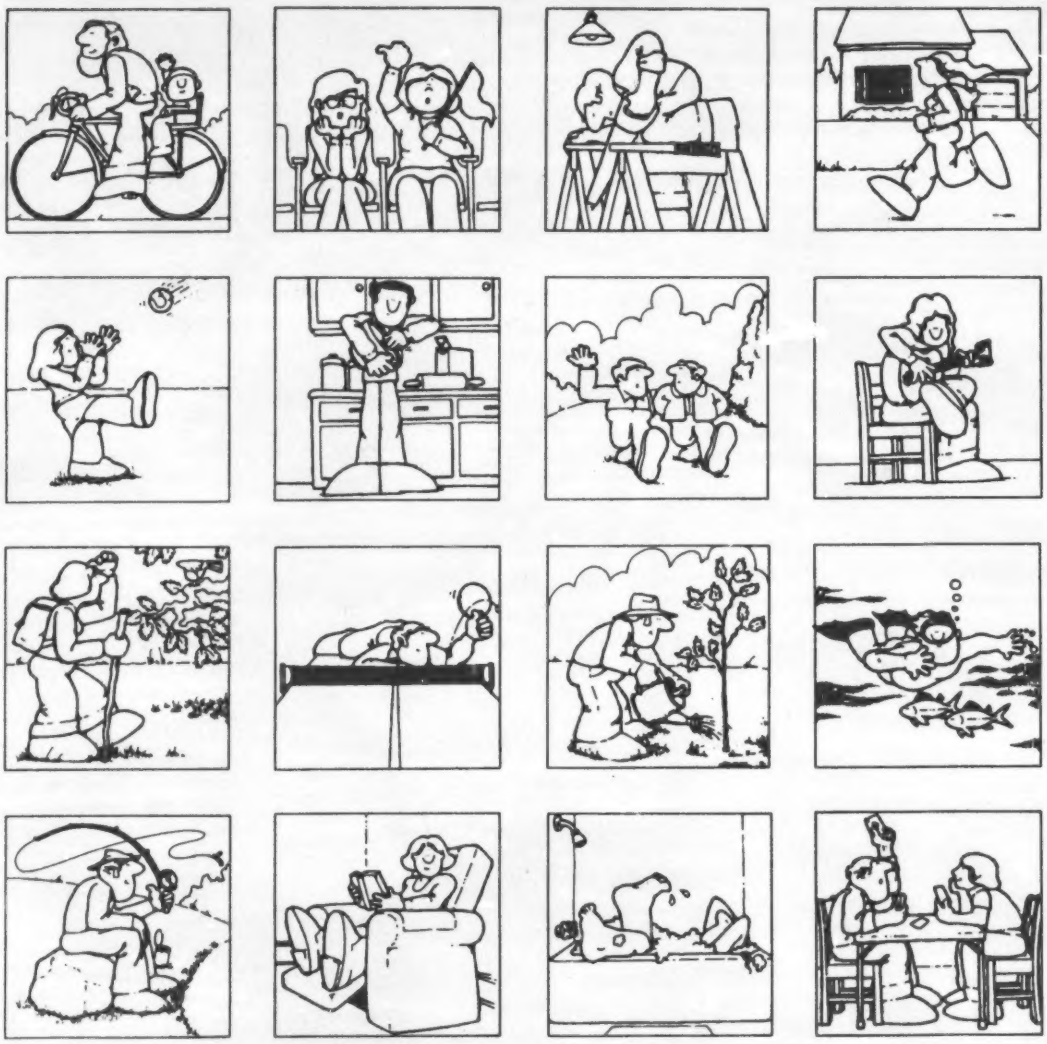
Set an Example

A good test of how reasonable the rules are that you set for your children is whether or not you can follow the same rules. Would you really expect your children to comply with a set of rules that you can't follow yourself? *Show* them what you mean by responsible drinking if that's what you expect from them. And keep in mind that what you may have in the medicine chest may be virtually identical to the "uppers" and "downers" that your children run into on the street—the only difference being the prescription label wrapped around yours. If you have any doubts about your own drug use and habits, this would be a good time to flip back to the Parent's Self-Test in Chapter 2.

A Final Note

Whatever you decide to do regarding the subject of alcohol/drug use and your children, remember that there really is no substitute for talking. Avoidance gets nothing accomplished. Talking it out may not be the most fun thing you've ever done, but you'll have made a start at a link between you and your children concerning alcohol/drugs. You'll have opened a door that can remain open, or slam shut. A lot of it's up to you.

What's there to do besides DRINK?



LOTS!

The choice is yours. You DO have a choice.

C. Developing Alternatives to Alcohol/Drug Use

People use alcohol and other drugs for a variety of reasons; to cope with problems, to have fun, or simply to feel better. Whatever the reason, this section is about all the many things there are to do besides use alcohol or other drugs, and the many ways there are of solving problems, coping, having fun, or even "getting high" that are chemical free. The time to be thinking about alternatives is *before* your children are faced with their own alcohol/drug decisions, but anytime is OK. Parents can assist their children in creating their own realistic alternatives to alcohol/drug use, and then encourage those non-chemical activities. It's one thing to say, "Don't use drugs!!!" and quite another to encourage non-chemical ways of dealing with life. Reasonable alternatives to alcohol/drug use need to be a part of your family's life.

There are as many reasons for using alcohol/drugs as there are people using them. When asked, most adults would offer some "reason" for why they are using a particular drug. Ever hear these?

- to get "high"
- to relax
- to control my nerves
- to feel better
- to put some excitement in my life
- to cope with my problems
- to cope with my life
- so I won't fly off the handle
- to be less nervous
- to have a good time
- to go to sleep
- to feel accepted by friends

To achieve any of the above-mentioned goals (or "reasons" for using alcohol or another drug) there are numerous other non-chemical ways of accomplishing the same thing. The following exercise will help make the point.

Exercise

Schedule some time with your middle school or older son or daughter to do this exercise together. There are some samples to look at before you fill in your own blanks.

SITUATION	DESIRED STATE	CHEMICAL WAY TO GET THERE	NON-CHEMICAL WAY TO GET THERE
ANXIETY	to feel less anxious	mix a drink have a beer take a Valium do a downer	Find someone to talk to; tell them about your anxiety. Let it out. Get rid of it. Do something that you find relaxing—read, take a hot bath, go for a walk.
NORMAL	to have some fun	mix a drink have a beer or two take a "mood elevating" pill smoke some pot snort some cocaine	Do something that "turns you on" or that you can get excited about. Try something you've never done before. Do something unusual or out of the ordinary for you. What are the ten most often fun things you can think of to do? Pick one and do it, or at least make some plans to do it in the future.
LONELINESS	to not be lonely	go to a bar and drink take a Valium take an amphetamine or "upper" to boost your spirits take a sleeping pill and forget about the whole thing	Get out of the house. Call a friend. Call anyone. Write a letter. Get busy with a project or an activity. Go someplace where there are not people using drugs; the library, the hardware store. Visit your neighbor. Find someone to talk to. Introduce yourself to someone new.

Here are three examples for you to fill in. Remember to do this exercise with your children; you may find them highly creative in thinking up non-chemical ways of dealing with their lives.

SITUATION	DESIRED STATE	CHEMICAL WAY TO GET THERE	NON-CHEMICAL WAY TO GET THERE
WORRIED	to stop worrying, or to worry less		
JUST "HANGING OUT"	to feel like my life is more exciting		
ANGRY	to get rid of my anger		

Are you finding that you and your children know of non-chemical ways of dealing with common situations? Great. Now fill in your own situations, and get specific so it fits your personal life. Alternate with your children; you do one, and they do one. See how many non-chemical ways you and your kids can think of for meeting your specific needs and situations. (Use a blank sheet of paper when you run out of space.)

SITUATION	DESIRED STATE	CHEMICAL WAY TO GET THERE	NON-CHEMICAL WAY TO GET THERE

As a result of doing this exercise you can now shift your mental gears over toward thinking of the hundreds of non-chemical activities that are available to you. Chemical-free activities are just about limitless. And the kicker is, jogging, sewing, reading, collecting, religious activities, visiting, cooking, walking, writing a letter, talking with a friend, tossing a Frisbee, walking the dog, fishing, sports, hobbies, window shopping, and hundreds of other activities are either free, or real cheap.

To really impress on your children that you're serious about them figuring out non-chemical ways of both dealing with problems, and of having fun, **show them**. Take them on an outing, do some of the activities listed above *with* your children. Check out your local YMCA—our local branch has inexpensive "family nights" where parents and children can participate in various sports, like swimming, **together**.

And next time you're facing a problem situation, **show** your kids that you can deal with your problems without relying on alcohol or other drugs. Keep in mind your powerful influence on them.

A Note on Money

Even though there are hundreds of free or very inexpensive chemical-free activities, be prepared to occasionally spend some money to support your child's pursuit of non-chemical activities. You can't *buy* a chemical-free life for your children, but if they need a membership fee to join a club or a team, if they need a few dollars to join the Scouts, if they need a basketball or a pair of skates that fit, consider it an investment. Consider it an investment in your children learning chemical-free ways of dealing with life and having fun. Consider it a statement that you support their healthy activities. Encourage your children to *earn* the money needed (or part of the money needed) to take up their chosen activity. If they've worked and earned a contribution toward their goal, it may give them an increased sense of accomplishment.

To emphasize commitment to chemical-free activities in your household, tear out the mini-poster at the beginning of the chapter and post it someplace where everybody will see it—like the refrigerator door, or the bathroom wall.

D. Television and the Family

Television has been called everything from the "window to the world" to "chewing gum for the mind." It's actually both. TV isn't necessarily good or bad by itself; like other things, it's how we use it that counts. How *much* we use it is also important.

Look at what television does. Suppose your family all sits down to watch a show together. Sounds like real "togetherness", right? Wrong. What happens is each individual rivets their attention on the glowing box, and very little human interaction occurs, if any. We let our emotions play out through the characters on the screen, but do not experience those emotions for real. The net effect: television separates family members instead of bringing them together.

And we're only talking about one TV show. Now multiply this effect by all the hours your family members spend watching the box. The average child watches 15,000 hours of television by the time he/she is through high school[4]. That's the same as if your children sat down in front of the TV and watched continuously, 24 hours a day, for a little over five years. The cumulative negative effect (family separation) of this much television watching for a family can be awesome.

Now consider all that viewing time in relation to television's blatant promotion of drug use. Through the advertising alone, our children learn that drinking is "macho," glamorous or sophisticated, and that drinking is what we must do to be accepted. We learn that there is a pharmaceutical answer for every problem we may encounter.

Headache? Take something with "extra strength," *Irregular?* Take a laxative. *Overweight?* Take a diet pill. *Heartburn?* Don't change your eating habits, just take an antacid. And or course there's a pill to make you go to sleep, a pill to relieve tension, a pill to cure your cold, a bubbly drink to cure your hangover, a pill for "the blahs," and on, and on, and on. The message: Don't change your lifestyle to improve your health, just swallow something; it's easier. Instant relief. It's a big reason we have medicine chests stuffed full of chemicals we'd do just as well without. It's also a factor contributing to our kids' acceptance of using drugs as a "normal" way of life.

Think I'm exaggerating? Sit down with your children and watch an entire evening of television. Have somebody mark on a list how many commercials there are for a drug of some kind. And don't forget alcohol: it's Ameria's number one abused drug. Mark down how many times alcohol or other drugs are used or are important in dramas and comedies, or how often a "I need a drink" message is given. See for yourselves how these subtle messages might be working on you and your children to encourage a life of using drugs or chemical substances to get instant relief. Look in your own medicine chest to see if those messages have been effective. Then think about the short jump in logic your child might make from all the advertised "OK" drugs, to recreational drugs she or he might begin using some day. Think about the connection.

What can a parent do? Here are some possibilities.

1. Exercise your parental responsibility to limit the amount of television watching in your home. Along with your children, decide on specified hours or specified shows that can be watched, or make TV "off limits" until homework is done, during dinner, or when guests are present. Set your own limits. Don't panic; your children actually will find other things to do! There was no television at all until the late 1940's, and people did survive.

2. Before the TV is turned on, insist that there be a specific show they want to watch; no television watching because there seems to be "nothing else to do."

3. Tell your children that every time they go to turn on the TV, you expect them to stop, take 30 seconds, and think of every possible thing they could do instead of watch TV. If they think of something they could do, expect them to do it and leave the box turned off. If you see them going through this exercise, give them some specific positive praise. If they don't come up with any good ideas for something else to do, then they watch. But at least they will have made an attempt and gone through a thinking process. Cut out and use the tag at the end of this section. Glue it to your television.

4. Propose alternative activities (see Chapter 4, Section C). Blow the dust off the "Clue" or "Yatzee" games, and play a game or two *with* your children. Game playing involves *people* interacting with *people*, not passively observing the glowing box.

---

4. Leary, John E. "Television: The Anti-Wellness Tool," *Health Education*, Sept.–Oct., 1979

5. Break the GOLDEN RULE of television watching. Watch some shows with your children but *interrupt* the "precious"dialogue and comment to your children about what's going on. Ask them what they think about what's going on. Break the silence. Snap out of the zombie-like passivity. Get a dialogue going about the shows, like this:

Cops and robbers—Why do thieves, muggers, murderers and burglars do what they do? How do you suppose they get started doing these things?

Drama—Is what's happening on the screen real? Is it really happening? Do this many people plot against each other, fight, and kill each other in real life (or in your neighborhood or town)?

Commercial—(turn sound off) What are some of the things being done here to convince you to buy this product? What are some of the techniques used (like fancy photography, beautiful models, paid testimonials, etc.)? Do you believe this ad? Why are they doing this? What has a singing lady with a wet mop got to do with clean floors?

And let your own feelings about what you're watching be known. Speak up. The set doesn't control your family; *you* control *it*. Turn TV watching into learning.

6. Use the Family Meeting (Chapter 4, Section A) to announce an experiment. For one day you're going to pack away the TV, or cover up a large one with an old tablecloth. There will be no television watched by any family member for that one day. You're doing this experiment to see what kinds of things there are to do with your time other than sit and observe the glowing electronic box. After the first day's experiment, explain that you're going to try it again, maybe for two days. Discuss it at a family meeting. Don't panic; rest assured that your family's collective imagination *will* come up with things to do.

Final Note

Last summer our family spent a week in a log cabin on a lake in the northern woods of Wisconsin. I don't think there was a TV within 17 miles. Miraculously we all survived. Our days were full, energizing, busy, and very enjoyable. We rediscovered each other. But you don't need to leave town to accomplish the same thing. Instead of allowing people to passively observe the glowing box, let your family experience people interacting with people. It's good for your kids and it's good for you.

Cut out the label below and attach to your TV in a very obvious place like right on top, or near the on-off knob:

STOP!!

Is there anything else, any other thing you can think of to do right now besides watch television?

Take 30 seconds to think about it!

E. Coping With Extreme Parental Stress

Some people have said that being a parent is one of the toughest jobs in the world. They're right. With every tough job there will be frustration, pressure, anger, resentment, and a lot of stress. It is OK for a parent to feel these things. It doesn't mean you're a bad parent; it means you're human.

Sometimes the pressure gets so great that a parent will feel that they can't stand it any longer. Sometimes in rage a parent will lash out at the nearest thing at hand—maybe a child. It happens —to a lot of parents. Lashing out at a child hurts. It hurts the child, and it hurts you.

There is something else you can do. When the pressure gets so great that you think you may lose control and strike out at your child:

★ Leave the room quickly; give yourself some time to calm down; find some ways of venting the anger and pressure that will not harm your child (i.e. pound a pillow, take a fast walk).

★ Call someone, a friend, a neighbor, a relative, someone you can talk to and trust. Tell them what you're feeling. When you tell another person, the pressure begins to drain away.

★ Call PARENTS ANONYMOUS and talk to someone who knows exactly what you're going through, and who will understand and not judge you.

Preparing for an Emergency

- if you would like to have a back-up system ready in case you need it. . . .
- if you know you're a parent with explosive potential. . . .
- if you were abused yourself as a child and are afraid of repeating some of the same things your parent did. . . .

Have a phone number posted where you'll always know where to find it, even in a hurry or in confusion. Write down the number of someone you trust and who understands. Look in your phone book to find the number of your local Parents Hot Line, Parents Anonymous, Parental Stress Center or Family Service Agency.

You can call toll-free 1-(800)-421-0353 anytime night or day to get the number of the helping resource nearest you. There are people who care, people who understand and are ready to help when you call. *Use* these services if you need help—it's what they're there for.

Preventive Medicine

Find out what kinds of things help you to relax. If you feel pressure building, it's time to do something relaxing and pleasurable for yourself.

Break out of your routine. If you are feeling stuck or tied down, give yourself "time off" to do some things you want to do. If your youngsters are not of school age, see if you can find free or inexpensive day care service, or offer to trade babysitting with a friend or neighbor to get yourself some time off. Check out local neighborhood centers where your kids could spend a day, or even an afternoon to give you some free time. Find out what the possibilities are in your neighborhood.

Your local mental health center or social service agency should be able to supply you with information on learning to relax and coping with stress. Talk to someone there; their services are almost always free, or on a sliding scale based on income. Look in the phone book under "Mental Health" or "Social Service."

With some preparation on your part, you can prevent damaging the relationship you have with your children. That damage could take the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.

And if you're feeling afraid, embarassed, or confused about talking it out with someone, remember:

★ it is OK to ask for help
★ you are not alone—other parents have the same feelings
★ you can change things with some help

Cut out and carry this number with you, or post it someplace where you will be able to find it in a hurry:

PARENT'S HELP NUMBER

The Last Page

You can sit and wait for your family to become what you want it to be, and wait and hope for your children to turn out the way you'd like them to. . . .

OR

You as a parent can take the initiative to mold and create the home environment you want for your children. **Reactive** means that you simply respond to things that have already happened. **Proactive** means that you jump out in front of the situation and make things happen the way you want them to. It means that you plan, prepare, and maybe plow some new roads for your family to follow. There is much a parent can do to prevent their children's alcohol or other drug abuse, if you'll take the initiative. It's up to you.

Appendix A

If you're worried that you might have a problem with alcohol, you have just taken a positive step by thumbing through to this section. Maybe in your private thoughts you've asked yourself, "Just how much of a problem do I have?" Many people in serious trouble with alcohol console themselves by saying that their drinking is just like anybody else's, not realizing that problem drinkers and alcoholics selectively and unconsciously spend more and more time with those particular friends who drink just as much as they do, so everything *appears* "normal." Here are some guidelines to help you sort it out.

If drinking alcohol (of any kind) has become an important part of your everyday life, and if your drinking is interfering with or causing problems with your health, or your job, or your home life, or your personal relationships, AND YET YOU CONTINUE TO DRINK, you may very well be an alcoholic.

Regardless of the label you or someone close might slap on you, "problem drinker," "abusive drinker," or "alcoholic," it's really a moot point. If you're in trouble with alcohol in any way, shape, or form, you need to get help and check into it further. Likewise, trying to figure out how or why you got to where you are is futile at this point in time. For today, it doesn't matter. What you're going to do about it does matter. Here are some relevant facts of life:

☞ There are 10 to 11 million alcoholic persons in the United States today; men, women, and adolescents.

☞ Most alcoholics have jobs, have families, and pay taxes just like everyone else. Residents of "skid row" comprise only about 3-5% of the alcoholic population.

☞ Denial that alcohol is a problem in one's life is one of alcoholism's chief symptoms.

☞ Summoning all the willpower you possess will not stop alcoholism. Willpower has little or nothing to do with it.

☞ Alcoholism implies no more moral weakness than tonsilitis.

☞ Alcoholism is a disease, just like diabetes or measles. But more importantly, it is a *treatable* disease. Some people have said that alcoholism is the world's most untreated treatable disease.

☞ If left untreated, alcoholism never gets better; it always gets worse. That's what they mean when they say that alcoholism is progressive.

☞ You cannot treat yourself. Just like you wouldn't fill a cavity in your own tooth, you need to get help to recover from alcoholism.

☞ There *is* a way out. It's called recovery, and every day lots more people begin theirs.

☞ Recovery isn't easy, and it doesn't happen fast. But it sure is worth it. Try a new way of living . . . what have you got to lose?

Where To Get Help

☞ Look in your phone book under "alcohol" to find the various programs available in your community or a nearby community. Many communities have alcohol councils which can assist you.

☞ Your place of employment may have an Employee Assistant Program; check it out.

☞ Most communities have a functioning chapter of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous); they're listed in the phone book. They don't charge a nickel. If you go to a meeting, you may be surprised to find some familiar faces there, also recovering.

☞ Call your local hospitals and ask if they have an alcoholism treatment program.

☞ Right now is the best time to do something about it. Not tomorrow, **right now**.

If Someone Close Drinks Too Much

If your spouse or someone close to you is in trouble with alcohol, there is something you can do. What you can't do is make them stop drinking. What you can do is start taking care of yourself. Look in your phone book under "alcohol" or call Al-Anon and talk to someone about it; they'll explain what taking care of yourself is all about.

Appendix B

In writing this book, the thought occurred to me that I was doing a lot of assuming of what it was that children need from their parents. So I decided to go to the source. I visited a combined 4th and 5th grade class at Longfellow School and a 7th grade class at Lincoln Middle School, both in Madison, Wisconsin. Each of the classes contained a good cross-section of children from varying backgrounds. Three questions were asked of the children, and their responses are listed here verbatim. The spelling is theirs, not mine.

These responses may give some indication of what kinds of needs children have. It would be ideal if families were open enough to ask for and get these kinds of responses from each other. The Family Meeting (Chapter 4, Section A) would be a good setting for reaching toward that goal.

☛ What are some things that your parents do that you like, or that please you?

4th and 5th graders:

"The way they say nice things when I do something good. The way they help me cope with my problems."

"I like when they comfort me when I don't feel good. I like it when they're strict sometimes too."

'Have little talks about things. Take me places. Play games with me. Take walks and try to have open feelings."

"I like when they take me on vacations. I like when I get allowance."

"Spend time with me. Let me use their things. Let me go to friends houses. Let me use my money the way I want to."

"I like it when my Dad helps me with my paper rout . . . ."

"When they take me somewhere just by asking if I want to. . . . When something isn't working that they try to suggest many things that might help. When they give me something on a day that isn't a special holiday. When they take time off work to be with me."

". . . like when my mom bought me knew shoes and I didn't know about it."

"When they give me a big birthday parday. Help me with my homework. Let me go to a movie with a friend alone."

"I like when they take you places, or when they don't yell at you."

"They understand me, help me, teach me, show they love me, pay attention to me. They answer my questions."

"Taking me to grandma's house. Spending time with me on work. Being home with me. Listen to me when I talk. What pleases me is when my parents really listen, and help me, and understand things that my friends might not. I like when they take me on trips to different places, and telling me things I really don't understand."

"They always spend time with me, and talk to me. They play games in summer and winter. They like to know what goes on at school. They pay attenchun to me."

"They give you things like new shoes. They take you out to a ice cream shop."

"They let me take classes on interesting things (soccer, Tap Dancing, Karate) They take us to relitives often."

"They don't fight. They don't smoke. My dad does not go away much."

"They feed me. They keep me alive. There nice to me . . . they hardly ever yell."

"When we spend time together. When my mom got me a cat."

"They help me do things that I don't know. They take me to fun places. They pay for ballet lessons, and a lot more things that I can't name!"

7th graders:

"Play cards."

"When they are in a good mood and are happy with me and what I do."

"They sometimes take me anywhere I want."

"Trust me to be responsible."

"When my mom and I bake two batches of cookies. She lets us ride down the stairs on a mattress."

"When they let me do stuff that I can do myself."

"Letting me go to a friend's house."

"They let me make my own decisions."

"Let me go shopping by myself."

"We go places that are fun in the summer."

"Take me skiing, or fishing, or camping, climbing, or swimming."

"When all they get is helth food. When I work all week and don't get my allowance."

"They smoke, sometimes they fight, they yell, they drink, they go out to much and make my brother and I babysit my little brother."

7th graders:

"When they always tell me who to like and what to do."

"When my dad puts me on a guilt trip."

"When they are over protected of me."

"When my mom says I can go to someplace then when it comes time to go she says no, I can't go."

"They drink. They smoke. They say things that imbarres me."

"Yell at me in front of people. Hit me."

☛ If you could change anything in your family, what would you change?

4th and 5th graders:

"I would chage my grandma and dad disliking each other. My grandma from drinking to much. My father always being selfesh and mean like yelling at me and throwing us around. My mother not gone all the time."

"I would change it so my parents wouldnt yell."

"I would like to be closer to my dad w/things that I am more close to w/my mom. That my mom wouldn't get home from work so late."

"All of them be nicer like my cats. My mom let me have long hair."

"Me and my sister would stop fighting so much. We could have a cat."

"I would change my mom and dads swering and yelling and I wish they would do chores instead of me doing them. I wish they would not get in so many fights."

"I would change all the fights."

"The family would not fight. Me and my sister would get alonge. We would have good stuff for dinner."

"Fighting, smoking, yelling."

"I would my mom and dad back together. Make them not get into long conversashens when it's cold."

"I'd like to make my dad to stop smoking."

7th graders:

"For me and my mom to get along better, and my dad."

"Make my family communicate better."

"Tell them not to smoke and drink."

"To make my mom to like pets so could have a dog."

"Make our family have no problems."

"I be the parent and they be the kids . . . see how it feels for a while."

"I don't want to change a thing."

☛ What are some things that your parents do that you don't like?

4th and 5th graders:

"I wish my dad would not smoke so much."

"When they punish me for something I didn't do. Or they don't pay attention to me, or forget that I am there or they treat my little sister better than me."

"Yell at me. When I'm sad usually they don't comfort me. Embaras me in front of other friends."

"When they yell at me."

"Give me un fair punishments. Tell me how they had to act when they were kids."

"When they say bad things about the things I like."

"When they have a bad day and take it out on me. When they say they are going to do something and don't do it because they forget and plan something else."

"Spank, yell, send me to my room. Kick, pinch. I wish they would not go to work becaus when they come home ther pickey."

"When they yell at you, or hit you or throgh you around."

"Yell too much. They make me clean up after my sister."

"I don't like when they yell at me and tell me I did something and I didn't. When they get mad and argue. I wish he would stop smoking."

"They swer to much. They yell to much. They always make me do things when they are tired."

"They won't let you play football with the big guys."

"My parents aquse me of doing things I did not do."

"They fight some times. Some times they swear."

"Not to tak us to a boring movie and not make us eat mushy stuff."

"Yelling, smoking."

"They yell. Drinking."

Resources and Recommended Reading

Bibliography for Parents

The following bibliography of books and pamphlets is intended to give you some ideas for continuing your search for information on families, parenting, and alcohol/drug abuse prevention. It is by no means a complete listing of available materials; it does represent some good works and references for continued reading. In addition to items listed here, check your local newsstand for current magazines concerned with families, and don't forget the public library—it's a tremendous source of good (and free) information.

Parenting and Families

Abidin, Richard R. *Parenting Skills*, Human Sciences Press, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011, 1976. (Trainer's Manual, 125 pp., $12.95; Parent Workbook, 123 pp., $4.50)

Bane, Mary Jo. *Here To Stay—American Families in the Twentieth Century*, Basic Books, 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022. 1978. ($4.95)

Becker, W. C. *Parents Are Teachers: A Child Management Program*, Research Press, 2612 N. Mattis Ave., Champaign, IL 61820. 1971. ($6.95)

Bel Geddes, Joan. *How to Parent Alone: A Guide for Single Parents*, Continuum Publishing Corp./ Seabury Press, 815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017. 1974. ($8.95)

Biller, Henry and Dennis Meredith. *Father Power*, Anchor Books, 501 Franklin Ave., Garden City, NY 11530. 1975. ($3.50)

Boston Women's Health Book Collective. *Ourselves and Our Children: A Book By and For Parents*, Random House, 400 Hahn Rd., Westminster, MD 21157. 1978. ($6.95)

Brayer, Herbert O. and Zella W. Cleary. *Valuing in the Family: A Workshop Guide for Parents*, Educational Materials, 8265 Commercial St., Suite 14, LaMesa, CA 92041. 1972. ($4.25)

Buntman, Peter H. and Eleanor M. Saris. *How to Live With Your Teenager: A Survivor's Handbook for Parents*, Birch Tree Press, 311 S. San Gabriel Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107. 1979. ($9.95)

Caplan, Frank, ed. *Parent's Yellow Pages*, Anchor Books/Doubleday, 501 Franklin Ave., Garden City, NY 11530. 1978. ($7.95)

Cordozo. P. *The Whole Kids Catalogue for Adventure Seekers of All Ages*, Bantam Books, Inc., 666 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10019. 1975. ($5.95)

D'Augelli, Judith F. and Joan M. Weener. *Communication and Parenting Skills*, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (Leader Guide $4.50 #017-024-00-859-1; Parent Guide $3.50 #017-024-00-860-5)

Dreikurs, Rudolf and Loren Grey. *A Parent's Guide to Child Discipline*, Hawthorne Books, Inc., 260 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. 1970. ($2.95)

Duberman, Lucile. *The Reconstituted Family: A Study of Remarried Couples and Their Children*, Nelson-Hall, Inc., 111 N. Canal St., Chicago, IL 60606. 1975. ($15.95)

Faber, Adele and Elaine Mazlish. *Liberated Parents/Liberated Children*, Avon Books, 959 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10019. 1975. ($2.25)

Galper, Miriam. *Co-Parenting: A Sourcebook for the Separated or Divorced Family*, Running Press, 38 S. 19th St., Philadelphia, PA 19103. 1978. ($4.95)

General Mills American Family Report: 1976-77. *Raising Children in a Changing Society*, General Mills, Inc., 9200 Wayzata Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55440. 1977.

Ginott, Haim. *Between Parent and Child*, Avon Books, 959 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10019. 1973. ($2.75). *Between Parent and Teenager*, MacMillan, 959 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10019. 1969. ($2.75)

Gordon, Dr. Thomas. *P.E.T. Parent Effectiveness Training*, New American Library, 1301 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. 1970. ($5.95)

Greenberg, Selma. *Right From the Start— A Guide to Non-Sexist Child Rearing*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Wayside Rd., Burlington, MA 01803. 1978. ($8.95)

Hofmeister, Alan M. and Charles Atkinson, Hester Henderson. *What Do I Do Now? Practical Ways to Develop Good Behavior in Your Child*, Argus Communications, 7440 Natchez Ave., Niles, IL 60648. 1978. ($2.95)

Isaacs, Susan and Marti Keller. *The Inner Parent.* "Raising Ourselves, Raising Our Children/Personal Growth and Family Patterns," Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 757 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017. 1979. ($9.95)

Kohl, Herbert. *Growing With Your Children,* Little, Brown & Co., 200 West St., Waltham, MA 02154. 1978. ($8.95)

Manser, Ellen. *Family Advocacy: A Manual for Action,* Family Service Association of America, 44 E. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. 1973. ($6.00)

Morrison, Eleanor S. and Mila U. Price. *Values in Sexuality: A New Approach to Sex Education,* A&W Publishers, Inc., 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016. 1974. ($6.95)

National Center for Alcohol Education. "An Ounce of Prevention. A Course for Blacks." "Powers of Positive Parenting. A Course for Parents." N.C.A.E., 1601 N. Kent St., Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22209. (703) 527-5727. (free) (course materials for lay facilitator and 12-20 participants in eight sessions)

National Institute of Mental Health. *Families Today,* "A Research Sample on Families and Children," 1979.

Nutt, Grady. *Family Time: A Revolutionary Old Idea,* American Family Society, Box 9873 M, Washington, DC 20015. 1977. ($2.00; organizing manual "Family Time Can Make the Difference in Your Community," 25¢)

Palmer, Pat. *The Mouse, The Monster and Me: Assertiveness for Young People,* Impact Publishers, PO Box 1094, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406. 1977. ($3.95)

Paolucci, Beatrice. *Family Decision Making: An Ecosystem Approach,* Wiley, John & Sons, Inc., 605 Third Ave., New York, NY 10016. 1977. ($8.95)

Parents As Leaders: The Role of Control and Discipline, ADAMHA, Printing and Publications Management Section, Rm. 6-105, 5600 Fishers Ln., Rockville, MD 20852. (single copies free)

Rinn, Roger C. and Allan Markel. *Positive Parenting,* Research Media, Inc., Hayward Square, PO Box 81, Cambridge, MA 02138. 1977. ($2.95)

Satir, Virginia. *Peoplemaking,* Science and Behavior Books, PO Box 11457, Palo Alto, CA 94306. 1972. ($5.95)

Thomas, Marlo. *Free to Be . . . You and Me,* McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 1974. ($6.95)

Alcohol and Other Drugs and Parenting

Books

Lingeman, Richard R. *Drugs From A to Z, A Dictionary,* McGraw-Hill Paperbacks, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 1974. ($3.95)

National Institute on Drug Abuse. (The following are available *free* from the National Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852. Many state clearinghouses also carry these.)

A Family Response to the Drug Problem
Research Issues 4: Drugs and Family/Peer Influence

Winn, Marie. *The Plug-In Drug: Television, Children and the Family,* Bantam Books, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10019. 1978. ($42.75)

Pamphlets

Write for current prices.

A Parent's Guide to Preventing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems, Regional Council on Alcoholism, 3101 Euclid Ave., Suite 707, Cleveland, OH 44115. 1979. 17 pp.

All in the Family: Understanding How We Teach and Influence Children About Alcohol, Operation Threshold, U.S. Jaycees, Box 7, Tulsa, OK 74102. 1975. 45 pp.

Fornaciari, Suzanne. *How to Talk to Kids About Drugs,* Prevention Materials Institute, 7101 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 20014. 1979. 32 pp. ($2.50)

Hazelden Foundation (Box 176, Center City, MN 55012): David Hancock, *Points for Parents Perplexed About Drugs,* 1975. (40¢) *Teen Drug Use: What Can Parents Do?* 1970. (40¢)

Johnson Institute. *Chemical Dependency and Recovery Are a Family Affair,* The Johnson Institute, 10700 Olson Memorial Hwy., Minneapolis, MN 55441. 1979. ($1.95)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (PO Box 2345, Rockville MD 20852): *How to Talk to Your Teenager About Drinking and Driving.* (free)

National Institute on Drug Abuse (National Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20852) *Drug Abuse Prevention for Your Family* (free) *For Parents Only—What You Need to Know About Marijuana* (free) *This Side Up: Making Decisions About Drugs* (free)

Ryan, C. Siegel and C. Williams. *How to Talk With Children About Drinking: A Parenting Guide to Alcohol Education,* National Congress of Parents and Teachers, 700 N. Rush St., Chicago, IL 60611. 1977.

Stamm, M. and B. Nissman. *Your Child and Drugs: A Preventive Approach,* Guidance Awareness Publications, Box 106, Rancocas, NJ 08073. 1973.

Wisconsin Clearinghouse. *Take the Time II.* (A booklet, for all ages, on constructive alternatives to the blahs). The Wisconsin Clearinghouse, 1954 E. Washington Ave., Madison, WI. 53704-5291. 1981. 50 pp. ($2.00)

Parent's Resources

This resource section lists some of the places which distribute information of interest to parents either free, or at a reasonable cost. Write to obtain a current listing of available publications.

American Family Society
Box 9873M
Washington, D.C. 20015

American Institute of Family Relations
5287 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

American Medical Association
Department of Health Education
535 North Dearborn St.
Chicago, IL 60610

Child Study Association of America
50 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Family Service Association of America
44 East 23rd St.
New York, NY 10010

National Association for Mental Health
1800 North Kent Avenue
Rosslyn, VA 22209

National Center for Health Education
Suite 215
901 Sneath Lane
San Bruno, CA 94066

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information (NIAAA)
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20852

National Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information (NCDAI)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20852

National Clearinghouse for Family Planning Information
P.O. Box 2225
Rockville, MD 20852

National Clearinghouse for Smoking and Health
Center for Disease Control
Building B, Room 222
Atlanta, GA 30333

National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse
111 E. Wacker Dr.
Suite 510
Chicago, IL 60601

National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)
700 North Rush St.
Chicago, IL 60611

National Council on Family Relations
1219 University Avenue, S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55431

National Federation of Parents for Drug Free Youth
P.O. Box 57217
Washington, D.E. 20037

National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20852

Office of Child Development
Department of Health & Human Services
110 6th St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20024

Parent Effectiveness Training Information
531 Stevens Avenue
Solana Beach, CA 92075

Parents Without Partners
7910 Woodmont Ave.
Washington, DC 20014

Science Research Associates
259 East Erie St.
Chicago, IL 60611

Sex Information & Education Council of the U.S.
84 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

U.S. Jaycees Family Life Program
U.S. Jaycees Products Division
Box 7
Tulsa, OK 74102

Other offices you can contact for information of interest to parents would be your own local:

Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Council
County Social Service Department
State University Extension Office
County (or Public Health) Nurse
Office of Family Planning
State Bureau of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse
Public Library

Your local phone book is a good resource for finding programs (look under "Alcohol" or "Family Services"), classes and/or information resources for parents. A little research can go a long way.

Multiple Choice

- ☐ Being a parent is a very important job.
- ☐ Being a parent means a lot of exhausting, frustrating, on-going, 24-hours a day hard work with few breaks and no pay.
- ☐ Being a parent is an extremely rewarding and enriching learning experience for an adult.
- ☐ Being a parent takes up a lot of an adult's time.
- ☐ Being a parent is fantastic!
- ☑ All of the above.

Wisconsin Clearinghouse
1954 East Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53704
Phone: (608) 263-2797